PARTISAN REVIEW

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PARTISAN REVIEW

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Editors: F. W. DUPEE, DWIGHT MACDONALD, GEORGE L. K. MORRIS, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, PHILIP RAHV. Business Manager: NANCY MACDONALD

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Contributors:

JOHN BERRYMAN has contributed verse to *The Southern Review, New Directions, The Kenyon Review* and other periodicals. He is an assistant in English at Columbia University. . . . RANDALL JARRELL is an instructor at Kenyon College. His first book of verse, *Blood For A Stranger,* will be published in the Fall. . . . MARY BARNARD'S poems have appeared in *New Directions* and *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.* . . . FRANCIS FERGUSSON, who teaches at Bennington College, has published an English version of Sophocles' *Electra.* . . . ANNE CHANNING, of Chicago, has contributed to several magazines. She recently received a prize given by *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.* . . . C. R. JACKSON writes for the Columbia Broadcasting System and is known in radio for his dramatizations on the Columbia Workshop program. "Palm Sunday" is his first published story. . . . JAMES LAUGHLIN is the editor of *New Directions.* DESMOND HAWKINS is an editor of *Purpose* and the *New English Weekly.* His first novel, *Hawk Among the Sparrows,* has just been published by Alfred A. Knopf. . . . ELIZABETH BISHOP, who has contributed several poems and a story to PARTISAN REVIEW, lives in Key West. . . . WILLIAM TROY'S essays on D. H. Lawrence and Thomas Mann appeared in previous issues of PARTISAN REVIEW. . . . MARY MCCARTHY, formerly on the editorial staff of PARTISAN REVIEW, has written on books and the theater for various periodicals. . . . CLEANTH BROOKS is an editor of *The Southern Review.* . . . DELMORE SCHWARTZ is the author of *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.* . . . HAROLD ROSENBERG has published poetry and criticism in *The Symposium, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,* and elsewhere. He lives in Washington, D. C.

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This Quarter

TWILIGHT OF THE THIRTIES

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO there appeared in the *New York Post* an interview with Arnold Zweig in which the eminent exile repudiated his anti-war novel, *The Case of Sergeant Grischa.* And in giving his reasons for thus publicly disowning the book on which his reputation in this country rests, Zweig struck the typical political note of our time. That novel, he eagerly explained, painted so vividly the agony and futility of the last war to save democracy that it has been used as evidence against participating in the new—the genuine war to save democracy! Hence, he said, he took this occasion to deplore and, if possible, to correct the harmful impression made by that work of his.

Only a few years ago such a revolting about-face by a writer of Zweig's stature would have been universally cited as a piece of demented reaction. In this retrograde period, however, the majority of writers who formerly would have challenged Zweig are actually of one mind with him. For aren't they all, nowadays, true-blue democrats together? Don't they assemble at literary congresses—such as the recent P.E.N. Congress and American Writers Congress—where the war drive is spiritually organized, where celebrities of such diverse and unequal talents as Thomas Mann and Dorothy Parker, Jules Romains and Dorothy Thompson, parading their loyalty to the status quo, solemnly engage themselves to provide the coming world-conflict with the required cultural unction and humanitary appeal.

Like Zweig, these people justify their political program by proclaiming their veneration of culture, by repeatedly telling us how "madly" they love literature and the arts. But there is one meaningful relation between culture and imperialist wars which these

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bellicose orators never allude to: and this is the fact that not a single work of art grew out of the ordeal of 1914-18 which is not filled with a spirit of loathing of the war. Every one of these works, revealing the duplicity of the ideals that promote such wars, is essentially an indictment of the society that begets them. And, likewise, let us note the further indisputable fact that the moral, if not the esthetic, origin of nearly every significant movement in post-war European and American writing has been traced to the opposition the war aroused among the people and the dissident intellectuals, to the exposure of its counterfeit idealism, to the virulent reaction against its predatory motives and aims.

The war novels of Barbusse, Remarque, Cummings, and Dos Passos are still remembered, but who remembers, who prizes, a single novel, poem, or play that applauded or vindicated the war? Plainly if literature is to survive another such experience it will do so not by concealing but by disclosing the real nature of the war, not by affirming but by negating it. What is Zweig doing, then, when he denies the truth his art told in his war novel? Denying the tangible and irreducible human values that alone can sustain literature, he is making common cause with the exponents of political alibis and mystifications. The better to defend literature in the abstract, he is renouncing it in the concrete. Such are the uses of bourgeois anti-fascism—for inevitably the theory of maintaining the cultural heritage by means of supporting our decrepit social system, including the wars it gives rise to, cannot but lead in practice to the same consequences as fascism itself.

2.

What is Zweig's recantation if not a symptom of hysteria, if not an expression of the present demoralized condition of letters? And it is not merely a question of peering into this or that writer's face for signs of political depravity. In reality it is the total function of the writer in this period and the meaning of his work which are involved here.

As the tide of patriotism and democratic eloquence rises, one observes an ebb of creative energy and a rapid decline of standards in all spheres of the intellect and of the imagination. Everyone knows that though books are still being printed in the totalitarian

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states, literature—in the qualitative sense of the term—has been "liquidated"; but very few people understand—as there is something like a conspiracy of silence on the subject—that in the democratic countries a similar course of liquidation is being followed. There are differences, of course, yet not so much differences of historic direction as of form and tempo. Whereas in the Third Reich, for instance, all free and authentic creation as well as thought are forcibly suppressed, in the democracies no force is employed because its application is as yet uncalled for. Here most of the artists and "thinkers" are voluntarily subjecting themselves to a regimen of conformity, are "organically" as it were—obediently and at times even with enthusiasm—adapting their products to the coarsening and shrinking of the cultural market. In this, the late hour of our society, one begins to perceive that what we are really witnessing is the first stage of a process that might be called the withering away of literature. Being the most ideological more than any other art literature responds openly and directly to changes in the social weather—the first to venture out into the bright and clement air, the first to turn tail when wintry darkness falls.

Consider the present situation. This is the one period in many decades which is not being enlivened by the feats and excesses of that attractive artistic animal known as "the younger generation." With very few exceptions, the younger writers today, instead of defying, instead of going beyond, are in fact imitating and falling behind their elders. There still are remnants, but no *avant-garde* movement to speak of exists any longer. The old boys have everywhere regained their authority. Everywhere the academicians, the time-servers, the experts in accommodation, the vulgarizers and the big money adepts are ruling the literary roost; and those few whose conscience in such matters is still awake have begun to look back at the nineteen-twenties as at a golden age, since that period, though not marked for its political wisdom, was exceedingly alive with experiment and innovation. For more than a hundred years literature, on a world scale, was in the throes of a constant inner revolution, was the arena of uninterrupted rebellions and counter-rebellions, was incessantly renewing itself both in substance and in form. But at present it seems as if this magnificent process is drawing to a close.

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Only one idea promised to re-vitalize literary expression in this decade. It was the idea of the social revolution in its specific application to culture, and it gave rise to a radical school of creative writing and to a Marxist literary criticism. This movement, however, turned into its very opposite after a brief span of life that was as blundering as it was exciting. From the start it was held in pawn by the Stalinists. At first devised for revolutionary ends, it has now been converted into a means of forcing literature back into the harness of the old society.

This movement pulled a great many writers into the orbit of politics. But this only means that a great many writers who were previously politically indifferent, and hence relatively immune to certain rabid notions, have been led to accept and even to idealize bourgeois values at the same time as the catchwords of "progress" and "democracy" delude them into imagining themselves to be still radicals. Yet having re-dedicated themselves to society, society re-dedicates itself to them. Never have the literary lions of the "left-wing" enjoyed such lavish hospitality from the world at large as at present, never have they received such bounties, such wholehearted recognition, from the very powers they profess to abhor. As for those writers who refuse to accompany the Comintern on its travels from one pole of the class struggle to the other, their works are placed on the expurgatory index and their persons committed to Satan. And the *New Masses* these days denounces John Dos Passos and Edmund Wilson as "enemies of the people" in the same issue in which Hollywood is saluted as a centre of culture.

There is manifestly a lesson about the relation of politics to literature to be drawn from this experience. For a long time now it has been held almost as an axiom by left critics that in entering the political world the artist improves both his mind and his art. The reverse of this was held to be true by the conservatives, so that in the controversy about "proletarian literature" that raged in the early 'thirties they uniformly urged artists to shun politics and retain their esthetic purity. But now, paradoxically enough, it turns out that it is precisely politics which has become the medium of a new, of an unprecedented affiliation of literature to ideas historically transcended generations ago and highly congenial to the present order of things. It should be noticed, also, that the conservative critics have ceased arguing against mixing politics with

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art; most of them have not only become reconciled to the situation but are actually blessing the official radicals. As to the spokesmen of the Communist Party, though they have quit handing out revolutionary prescriptions, they still exorcise the demon in the "ivory tower" and exhort writers to assume political obligations. Obviously in this era politics has played a contradictory role on the literary scene. If at first it drew the literary imagination closer to social reality, enabling it to assimilate a series of fresh phenomena, it is now, conversely, despoiling this imagination and provoking its self-destructive impulses. And in saying this I am thinking, of course, of the norms of writing today, of its typical practitioners, and not of its marginal groupings or exceptional individuals.

Think of all the talent that, due to political pressures, has of late been misused and distorted. Has Hemingway, for example, ever written anything as bad, as silly, as *The Fifth Column?* Think of Louis Aragon, the author of such excellent works as *Le paysan de Paris* and *Front Rouge,* who is now writing academic novels exposing the last war at the same time that he disseminates propaganda in favor of the next war. With equal ardor, in his capacity as editor of the newspaper *Ce Soir,* he is devoting himself to the defence of the French Empire and Stalin's totalitarian state. Also there is the salient case of André Malraux. Having written a book as uncommonly good as *Man's Fate,* only a few years later he produced *Man's Hope,* a novel generally regarded as a truthful record of the Spanish war. But now that information as to what really happened in Spain is easily accessible, it should be recognized even by the most obtuse for what it is—an invention out of the whole cloth. This glamour novel of the People's Front is a work of empty heroics, devoid of a single real character. A cleverly composed party-pamphlet in the guise of objective fiction, its consummate rhetoric serves only to swell its illusions. Its pretentious political-intellectual dialogues represent nothing but the fantasies of a fellow-traveler who, no longer capable of thinking for himself or of seeing life through his own eyes, has taken pains to substitute an imaginary drama of hope and fraternity for the black counter-revolution in Loyalist Spain that swept the anti-fascists to their defeat. The only parts of the novel that are not false are the plainly reportorial descriptions of air battles and of the sensations of the

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combatants. But as a whole, for a writer of Malraux's high abilities, *Man's Hope* is a sheer waste.

And the lesson of all this is not that writers were mistaken to interest themselves in social causes or that they should stay out of politics. Literature does not make its own conditions; it is subject to the general process of social determination. The lesson, rather, is that politics *qua* politics, as the ivory tower *qua* the ivory tower, is neither good nor bad for literature. Both are X quantities, in their own right neither regressive nor advanced as modes of literary response to experience. But they become meaningful insofar as they are forms or modalities that each historic situation fills with its own content, with its own time-spirit. Art as such derives no special benefits from the exclusively esthetic, the social and political, the religious, or any other attitude that the artist may adopt towards life; and we should be wary of the large claims that certain critics are making for politics as a boon to art. The real question is more specific: what is the artist actually doing in politics? what is he *doing with it* and what is it *doing to him?* How does his political faith affect him as a craftsman, what influence does it exercise on the moral qualities and on the sensibility of his work? And from this point of view anybody who, in becoming political-minded, attaches himself to the international Tammany Hall that Stalinism has turned into, or to some other national or class dogma, is doing much worse for himself *as an artist* than he who, refusing to "join up," continues to create in the traditional individualistic styles. The stupidities that the latter might be guilty of will be at least of a personal and not of a public character. And the ivory tower, after all, is an infinitely more commendable home for literature than Tammany Hall.

Yet in our time literature, in its characteristic aspects, is no longer at liberty to decide for itself whether to spurn or to enter politics. For better or worse, politics is shaping its strict destiny. It might still, to be sure, serve other ends too, but it can no longer hang back from assuming the duties and facing the hazards of social partisanship. As the chronic crisis of capitalism extorts from every human being greater and greater sacrifices of will, consciousness, and individuality, depriving people of whatever independence they might have had and of whatever power was theirs to act upon and determine their own lot, the literary themes of private

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life lose more and more the interest and significance they once possessed. The crisis is socializing the art-object. Instead, however, of the socialization proceeding on a revolutionary basis, as many of us hoped and expected, it is proceeding in a manner so retrograde as to force it down to lower levels of awareness and formal value. Yielding to the reactionary *Zeitgeist*, the art-object has begun to reflect and express the two great political catastrophes —profoundly related to each other—of our epoch: the victories of fascism and the defeat of the Bolshevik revolution.

It is impossible, it seems to me, to understand the cultural decline except by seeing it in the perspective of this double catastrophe, which cruelly and infallibly reveals the true loyalties of every movement, party, and group. What else will account for the extraordinary revival of ideas and attitudes, here as well as abroad, which the radical intellectuals had discarded many decades ago? Consider the obsolete thinking embodied in books of the kind that such people as Jerome Frank, Max Lerner, and Lewis Mumford have recently published and which have been hailed as "tracts for our times." Jerome Frank, for example, has devised a theory of capitalism in one country. He tries to prove that the present economic system can survive in America in solitary and happy self-sufficiency; in other words, an inferior brand of Stalinism, for Stalinism believes at least in socialism in one country, and even that, as the Russian experience conclusively shows, cannot be accomplished. Max Lerner advised us that the productive forces can be collectivized without getting rid of the capitalists, and that the People's Front (which is dead already both in Spain and in France, the only countries where it ever came to life) is the sole means of saving us from fascism. Finally, the really phenomenal Lewis Mumford assured us, first, that there is no reason to berate the French and British imperialists, since they have reformed, it appears, and are now only lightly and gingerly exploiting their colonial slaves; second, that the last war was not unjustified; and third, that if perhaps the motives and consequences of that war can nevertheless be shown to have been just a little tainted, then surely the next war will be wholly noble and just, all in all a romantic trial of strength between good and evil.

Not since the antediluvian days of the "genteel tradition" have American writers been so respectable, so anxious to appease

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official public opinion. But, unlike the old, the new gentility is not based on a growing economy and a rising civilization; it is based on a downward-curving economy and an exhausted civilization—hence its real content is fear and hypocrisy, not puritanism, provincial manners, and hard work. There is also coming into being, side by side with the new gentility, a new literature of historical conjuring with ghosts, a literature in which, as in Elmer Rice's play, *American Landscape,* and in other recent plays, poetry, and stories, the renowned dead of the Republic are implored to teach the quick how to live, what to do.

And what is this new nationalism, this bombast about the "American way of life," this so-called "rediscovery of our democratic past" if not the second childhood of bourgeois progress, if not a futile effort to solve the problems of today with the solutions of yesterday? When the revolutionaries of 1789 draped themselves in the togas of the heroes of the Roman Republic, they were manifesting symptoms of childhood, which loves imitation; when our social-patriots of 1939, however, dress up in the costumes of the heroes of 1776, they are manifesting symptoms, not of childhood, but of senility. The fact is that nationalism, whether invoked by Roosevelt, Hitler, or Stalin, has long ago become the shield and property of the dominant classes; and our democratic order, whose liberties are sharply limited to politics alone, cannot simply be conserved as it stands. Either it will be changed by revolutionary methods into a socialist democracy or the fascists will take care to "reform" it from the right.

We are now entering an epoch in which thought images history in the reverse. Its most voluble oracles, in art and in politics alike, have forgotten or are unable to learn that the grand and vital truths of the past are often transformed into the superstitions, into the lemures and vampires of the present.

3.

To speak of modern literature is to speak of that peculiar social grouping, the intelligentsia, to whom it belongs. The intelligentsia, too, is a modern product, created by the drastic division of labor that prevails under capitalism. Restricted to the realm of

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technical and spiritual culture, which is their only real property, the intellectuals make their livelihood by preserving the old and by producing the new forms of consciousness. Now Marxist criticism, in discussing the social base of literature, has always laid too much stress on such terms as "bourgeois" and "proletarian." This is an error, I think, because literature is not linked directly to the polar classes, but associates itself with (or dissociates itself from) the life of society as a whole as well as the different classes within it by giving expression to the given bias, the given moods and ideas of the intellectuals. An examination of the special role and changing status of the intelligentsia is, therefore, essential to any social examination of modern literature.

Trotsky is, I believe, the only Marxist critic who develops his analysis of writers and literary trends largely around this concept. Thus he connects the symbolist schools that flourished in Russia before the October revolution with the growing self-determination, in that period, of the intelligentsia, which proclaimed that "it had its own value, regardless of its relation to the people." But Trotsky does not credit this factor with sufficient power. This self-determination occurred also in other countries and it was directed not only against the masses but against the ruling strata as well. Materially and politically it was an illusion, of course, since the intellectuals remained at bottom as dependent as ever; yet in other respects it encouraged the creation of moral and esthetic values running counter to and often violently critical of the bourgeois spirit.

Regardless of their specific historical meanings, most of the typically modern literary tendencies, such as romanticism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism, surrealism, etc., could not have become articulate save through the support, through the necessary social framework, provided by this relative detachment of the intellectuals from a society intrinsically hostile, and at best indifferent, to the rights of the human personality and to everything imaginative, gratuitous, natural, and commercially devoid of advantages. In American literature, for instance, the typically modern did not appear until late, until the years before the World War in fact; and the reason seems to be that in America, because of the concentration on the physical mastery of the continent, it was not until the twentieth century that a separate intellectual class emerged con-

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scious of itself as standing apart from society and as possessing special and superior interests and ideals.

The modern artist has been rebuked time and again by social-minded critics both of the right and of the left for his obsessive introversion, his jealously maintained privacy, his esthetic mysticism, his bent toward the obscure and the morbid. Yet without such qualities, given the boundaries of the bourgeois world, he could not have survived. These qualities are not derived from a limitless confidence that this artist has in himself (the opposite is often the case) but from the group-ethos, from the proud self-imposed isolation of a cultivated minority. It is this isolation which was translated ideologically into various doctrines—the theory of art for art's sake is a striking example—that could simultaneously be put to aristocratic as well as bohemian uses. For a long time it enabled the art-object to resist being drawn into the web of commodity relations. Being an impersonal exchange value, a commodity is a product that dominates its producer; and whereas in almost every other sphere the conversion of products into commodities robbed the producers of their individuality, in the sphere of art many producers still found it possible—through a valiant effort, certainly, and at the cost of much suffering—to remain the masters instead of the victims of their products.

But the contradiction in this is that it is precisely its integrity which is to a large extent synonymous with the "anti-social" character of so much of modern art. Inevitably so, for during the greater part of the bourgeois epoch not to conform meant to repel the social, and rather than pay the price of being at one with society, the artist chose to be alone with his art: he preferred alienation from the community to alienation from himself. "Anywhere out of the world," said Baudelaire; and Flaubert formulated the belief of a whole race of artists in claiming that "now that the bourgeoisie is all humanity" art had become particularly valuable, since in art, at least, "all is liberty in a world of fictions." "When there is no encouragement to be derived from one's fellows," he wrote, "when the exterior world is disgusting, enervating, corruptive, and brutalizing, honest and sensitive people are forced to seek within themselves a more suitable place to live. . . . The soul, made to overflow, will be concentrated in itself."

Flaubert and the other protestants of art and thought did not

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so much retire into themselves, however, as into their group lives and group cultures. They immersed themselves in the "destructive element," which has been defined as the awareness of "a void in the present." Moreover, in their desire to recover the lost unity of consciousness, they created a whole range of what might be called idealized negations of the society they scorned: some made a religion of art, some denied the reality of ideas in order to gain freedom in a life of sensations, some embarked on expeditions into the past in search of ancient mythologies and the old religions. From *René* to *The Waste Land*, what is modern literature if not a vindictive, neurotic, and continually renewed dispute with the modern world?

But the effect of the crisis of our time has been to undermine this tradition, so that at present it is fast breaking up. In the first place its social equilibrium was destroyed as soon as the weakened capitalist system withdrew the privilege of limited self-determination hitherto granted to its intellectuals. Once the very existence of this system was threatened, it could no longer afford to "keep" its intelligentsia in a state of even semi-independence; nor could the latter, now that it was compelled to think seriously of its future, afford any longer to belittle and neglect political creeds and political action. Despite all their postures of objectivity, it is the law of social gravitation toward the ruling class which, in the last analysis, determines the behavior of the intellectuals. Still, their problem was not simple, for the actual location of the ruling class was not at all obvious any more. The question was: Who is the real ruler? Is he the benighted and visibly decaying bourgeois or is he that enlightened and mighty proletarian who, as they were assured, was successfully building socialism in Russia as well as preparing the revolution the world over? And many decided to throw in their lot with the youthful contender for power.

The modern literature of individualism was then belabored on all sides by the new converts to the socialist cause. Those of its critics who remained friendly admired its past splendors while insisting that it put political teeth into its abstract-spiritual dissent from bourgeois values. On the other hand the whole-hog leftists, led by the impassioned party-liners, attacked it outright for projecting its ideals back into history instead of forward into the

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classless society, for being self-centered, pessimistic, obscurantist, and so on and so forth.

But now that this movement has abandoned its social goal, it can be seen that in reality it was not to the revolution that so many writers were converted but simply to politics. Yet politics—ordinary reformist and parliamentary politics—has nothing to offer to the literary artist. It was one thing to criticise the individualist tradition from a revolutionary standpoint, but it is something else again to criticise it from the standpoint of Stalinist social-mindedness. In view of what has happened, is it not clear that the older tradition was a thousand times more "progressive"—if that is to be our criterion—was infinitely more disinterested, infinitely more sensitive to the actual conditions of human existence, than the shallow political writing of our latter days?

4.

Is a new tendency in literature possible today? Is there a basis for a new vanguard group whose members, not frightened by isolation, know how to swim against the current? After all, not all writers have reverted to some safe-and-sane way of thinking, and among those who consider themselves liberals and even Marxists not all are held on a leash by some pseudo-radical organization. The revolution may have sunk out of sight and the intelligentsia may be sticking close to its paymaster-mentors, but the impulse to represent experience truthfully still persists. The impulse persists, even though the job of judgment and representation has seldom been so arduous, so perplexing, so enmeshed in ambiguous claims and counter-claims. Yet part of the job is to evaluate these claims. If one is to be equal to the contemporary subject-matter, one cannot shut one's eyes to the unruly presences that beset it.

I do not believe that a new *avant-garde* movement, in the proper historical sense of the term, can be formed in this pre-war situation. For obituaries, however, the time is not yet; despite multiple pressures a literary minority can still maintain its identity. And even if it cannot look forward to an expansive career, still what it can do is to warn. We should remember the fateful words of Wilfrid Owen, spoken during the last war: "All a poet

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can do today is to warn. That is why the true poets must be truthful."

For this minority, which has learned how to resist the reactionary *Zeitgeist,* there is surely no turning back to pre-political modes of expression; but neither should it bind itself to some closed and definitive political doctrine. For it is in becoming a mouthpiece that the writer defeats himself. His work is vitiated not so much by the errors he commits in his own right, not so much by the errors he has actually *lived,* as by the seemingly impersonal errors which are for that very reason all the more abjectly mindless, by the errors that he imitates out of cowardice and the servile desire to ingratiate himself. Moreover, even the best of doctrines is thick with prohibitions. It is much too remote and narrow a base for literature, which relates itself to life through experience and only secondarily through ideas. If a sufficiently organic, active, and broad revolutionary movement existed, it might assimilate the artist by opening to him its own avenue to experience; but in the absence of such a movement all he can do is to utilize the possibilities of individual and group secession from, and protest against, the dominant values of our time. Needless to say, this does not imply a return to a philosophy of individualism. It means that all we have left to go on now is individual integrity—the probing conscience, the will to repulse and to assail the forces released by a corrupt society.

The dissident artist, if he understands the extremity of the age and voices what it tries to stifle, will thus be saved from its sterility and delivered from its corruption. Instead of deceiving himself and others by playing with bureaucratized visions of the shining cities of the future or else by turning his art into a shrine for things that are dead and gone, he would be faithful to the metamorphosis of the present. And every metamorphosis, it has been said, "is partly a swan song and partly a prelude to a great new poem."

PHILIP RAHV

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Poems

THE STATUE

The statue, tolerant through years of weather,
Spares the untidy Sunday throng its look,
Spares shop-girls knowledge of the fatal pallor
Under their evening colour,
Spares homosexuals, the crippled, the alone,
Extravagant perception of their failure;
Looks only, cynical, across them all
To the delightful Avenue and its lights.

Where I sit, near the entrance to the Park,
The charming dangerous entrance to their need,
Dozens, a hundred men have lain till morning
And the preservative darkness waning,
Waking to want, to the day before, desire
For the ultimate good, Respect, to hunger waking;
Like the statue ruined but without its eyes;
Turned vaguely out at dawn for a new day.

Fountains I hear behind me on the left,
See green, see natural life springing in May
To spend its summer sheltering our lovers,
Those walks so shortly to be over.
The sound of water cannot startle them
Although their happiness runs out like water,
Of too much sweetness the expected drain.
They trust their Spring; they have not seen the statue.

Disfigurement is general. Nevertheless,
Winters have not been able to alter its pride

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If that expression is a pride remaining,
Coriolanus, and Rome burning,
An aristocracy that is no more.
Scholars can keep their pity; from the ceiling
Watch blasted and superb inhabitants,
The wreck and justifying ruined stare.

Since graduating from its years of flesh
The name has faded in the public mind,
Or doubled: which is this? The elder? Younger?
The statesman or the traveller?
Who first died or who edited his works,
The lonely brother due to remain longer
By a quarter-century than the first born
Of that illustrious and lost family?

The lovers pass. Not one of them can know
Or care which Humboldt is immortalized.
If they glance up, they glance in passing,
An idle outcome of that pacing
Which never stops, and proves them animal;
These thighs, breasts, pointed eyes are not their choosing,
But blind insignia by which are known
Season, excitement loosed upon this city.

Turning: the brilliant Avenue, red, green,
The laws of passage; marvellous hotels;
Beyond, the dark apartment where one summer
Night an insignificant dreamer,
Defeated occupant, will close his eyes
Mercifully on the expensive drama
Wherein he wasted so much skill, such faith,
And salvaged less than the intolerable statue.

John Berryman

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ON THE LONDON TRAIN

Despite the lonesome look
The man in the corner has,
Across the compartment,
Doubtless a dozen daze
Daily their eyes on him intent
And fancy him beside a brook,
Their arms with his laced,
Holding him fast.

While he for some virgin
Endures the endless night
Without rest, and would go
On bare knees, eyes shut tight,
To Tomsk or San Diego
If she'd but let him in,
Bind his hurt knees, or say
'There is a doctor down the way'.

So it is and has been.
Summon an old lover's ghost,
He'll swear no man has lied
Who spoke of the painful and most
Embarrassing ordeal this side
Satisfaction. And the green
Difficulties later are
More than Zeus could bear.

Austere in a sheltered place
The sea shell puzzles Destiny,
Who set us, man and beast
And bird, in extremity
To love and get a nest.
The frown on the great face
Is recompense but little for
Who suffer on the shore.

John Berryman

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A STORY

Even from the train the hill looked empty,
As I unpacked I heard my mother say:
"Remember to change your stockings every day—
Socks, I mean." I went on walking past their
Buildings gloomy with no lights or boys
Into the country where the roads were lost.

But when I woke I thought—The roads aren't lost.
That night the buildings were no longer empty
But packed and blazing with unpacking boys.
Up by the trestle I heard someone say:
"Then they haven't heard of it." I strained to hear their
Quiet funny voices, but it turned to day.

What do the students talk about all day?
Today the dean said: "There's a new boy lost."
He said it to the matron, I could hear their
Footsteps in the corridor, but it was empty.
I must tell them what I heard those people say.
When I get up I'll tell the other boys.

I liked home better, I don't like these boys.
When I wake up I think: "It's dark today."
When I go out these people hardly say
A word to me, I wrote home I had lost
My fountain pen, my mail-box is still empty,
Because they've all forgotten me, they love their

New friends better—if I don't get their
Letters ever I don't care, I like these boys
Better than them, I'll write them. "We've still one room empty,"
The matron told the man who came today.
How *could* she lie like that? When the roads leave here they're lost,
The signs in the country can't think of what to say.

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Someone must know. The people here all say
"*I* don't." I dream I ask them, and I see their
Thoughts don't either, all of them are lost.
Don't signs, don't roads know any more than boys?
When I feel better, they'll wake up one day
And find my bed's the one that's empty.

Randall Jarrell

WINTER EVENING

In the mountains, it is said,
The deer are dying by hundreds.
We know nothing of that
In the suburbs.

The cougar,
And death by being devoured,
The snow starving and shrouding
With one economical gesture
Are ancestral myth. Our century
Clings to the novel.
Coffee and novels.

With all the town's usual
Stirrings muffled in snow,
The train whistles, only,
Howl against death
Over the plump white hills,
The billowing roofs—
Howl like Lear in his heartbreak,
Savage as a new myth.

Mary Barnard

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FABLE FROM THE CAYOOSH COUNTRY

As we lay at the lake edge, feet pointing northwest,
Our thought pushed forward into the margins of silence.
There would be the crying of creeks, birds,
And animal young, but verbal silence.
A region crowded with nameless mountains.

Thorn branches sheltered the beach,
Graying the arrested twilight.
Indians passed at our feet,
Averted profiles moving against the clear lake,
Against the boundaries of an inarticulate world.

We slept, and our minds crawled with words.
Footloose words ran about in our dreams.

I went, a missionary, into the mountains,
Taking the grammars of all languages.
I preached the blessing of the noun and verb,
But all was lost in the furred ear of the bear,
In the expressive ear of the young doe.
What the doe said with her ear, I understood.
What I said, she obviously did not.

Despairing, I flung my textbooks into a rocky pool,
And the stream turned through the volumes, speaking clearly.
"Where my monologue runs, there was once the debate of the
beasts.
The burrows bubbled with words, conversation
Issued from the mouths of caves.
Where there was speech there is now only my voice.

"Had the mountain goat need of his eloquence
To make of his native rocks a rostrum?
Did the beaver's young learn industrious ways of a proverb?
The humming bird was a fiction. What legend could please her?

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"The blade of this tool, useless for digging, chopping,
Shearing, they used against each other with such zeal
They all but accomplished their own extermination.
Then—they abandoned speech!
They retained cries expressive of emotion,
As rage, or love. That was all.
That was eons ago.
Consider this thing," said the stream, in six languages.
"They have never seen any cause to repent their decision."

I dreamed then, of a tide in the lake.
It rose over us where we slept
And flooded southward into the settled country.
My consternation was that of a poet, whose love
If not his living was gravely endangered.

I awoke, and the lake was in place.
Perhaps that was a pity. A purification . . . ?
Perhaps if one rose now and bathed in the water?

Mary Barnard

SUNDAY AFTERNOON:
Avenue A Considered as a Grave

—*Therefore we live: though such a life we have*
As but so many Mandrakes *on his grave.*
—Elegie on Prince Henry.

Afternoon silent as glass
In the bright Pax Americana.
'Pigeons on the grass, alas!'
And in the rotogravure

John D., the little éidolon
(Hero without imperium)
Blinks withered in the winsome sun
Of Ormond, its Elysium.

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Who then creep out, unshaken
By Roman wheels, to play,
When he is gone who could waken
The Sabbath gigantic causeway?

—'Ce ne sont pas des hommes, hélas!
Ce ne sont pas des femmes;'
'Pigeons on the grass, alas!'
'Ce sont des américains.'

—But who is it this light sun breeds
From what has died, to Sunday shoes,
To discontent, here in the clean
North-warehouse-shadow's mortuary dews?

—The harmless *keres* of him,
Infesting the bones he left;
His powerhouses shut and dim . . .
We are free when we are bereft,

Whom neither the iron derrick's
Impotency
Nor the black smokestacks'
Claim of the sky
Nor our brief shadows'
Confluence, in the still doorway
(And under the consenting death of gastanks)
Can satisfy or destroy.

Francis Fergusson

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BENEFIT

Ardent fruits of action freeze
To balls of gold on parlor trees,
The coat that keeps the farmer warm
Next year becomes the student's whim:
My native air has power to turn
The marrow into bric-a-brac.

When all the night is at its back
A window forms a looking-glass
Where women greet their vanity:
The hunger of the subject class
Reflects our pity, so that we
Eating, remember others' lack,
And taste compassion in our tea.

Anne Channing

THE PRIORESS' TALE

Once in a time praised for its unity
A child passed the Jewry, carrying his song,
With his tender windpipe and small tongue
Beaming music on black masonry.
The Belgian child of severed hands
Could yield a legend of a like beauty,
But the parent lie in its wild state
Burns with disorder and misery.
'Jews wore white tunics, a badge at the breast,
Must keep to their houses during Christian feasts.'

Dissolve the orders of our memory.

Anne Channing

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The Situation in American Writing

Seven Questions

WE ARE PUBLISHING below the replies to a questionnaire submitted to a representative list of American writers. A second group of answers, received too late for publication in this issue, will be printed in the Fall number. Contributors will include Sherwood Anderson, Louise Bogan, Horace Gregory, R. P. Blackmur, William Troy, Lionel Trilling, Robert Penn Warren, James Agee, and Robert Fitzgerald. The questionnaire follows:

1. *Are you conscious, in your own writing, of the existence of a "usable past"? Is this mostly American? What figures would you designate as elements in it? Would you say, for example, that Henry James's work is more relevant to the present and future of American writing than Walt Whitman's?*

2. *Do you think of yourself as writing for a definite audience? If so, how would you describe this audience? Would you say that the audience for serious American writing has grown or contracted in the last ten years?*

3. *Do you place much value on the criticism your work has received? Would you agree that the corruption of the literary supplements by advertising—in the case of the newspapers—and political pressures—in the case of the liberal weeklies—has made serious literary criticism an isolated cult?*

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4. *Have you found it possible to make a living by writing the sort of thing you want to, and without the aid of such crutches as teaching and editorial work? Do you think there is any place in our present economic system for literature as a profession?*

5. *Do you find, in retrospect, that your writing reveals any allegiance to any group, class, organization, region, religion, or system of thought, or do you conceive of it as mainly the expression of yourself as an individual?*

6. *How would you describe the political tendency of American writing as a whole since 1930? How do you feel about it yourself? Are you sympathetic to the current tendency towards what may be called "literary nationalism" — a renewed emphasis, largely uncritical, on the specifically "American" elements in our culture?*

7. *Have you considered the question of your attitude towards the possible entry of the United States into the next world war? What do you think the responsibilities of writers in general are when and if war comes?*

John Dos Passos:

1. In relation to style and methods of writing, I hardly think of the past in chronological order. Once on the library shelf Juvenal and Dreiser are equally "usable." The best immediate ancestor (in Auden's sense) for today's American writing is I think a dark star somewhere in the constellation containing Mark Twain, Melville, Thoreau and Whitman.

2. The audience is probably the people who read books other than best sellers. I doubt if it has expanded much in the last ten years, though in the preceding five years it certainly expanded. It may very well be shrinking now.

3. The critics for the daily press, and all newspaper writers live in a

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very special world. I think they are more influenced by the ebb and flow of headlined fashions, and by the varying standards in social prestige of that world than by any direct advertising pressure. Advertising probably determines the space given a book, and in the long run I think it will be found that the various publishers' lists get respectful attention in direct relation to the financial position of the concerns. After all, what do you want for three cents? Current newspaper criticisms are interesting to the social historian just as fashion notes are interesting. I doubt very much if they will take their place in the "usable past." There's not enough, but there is some first rate literary criticism around that, naturally, is very useful to a writer.

4. I've managed to do it so far, but it's nip and tuck.

5. Isn't an individual just a variant in a group? The equipment belongs to the society you were brought up by. The individuality lies in how you use it. My sympathies, for some reason, lie with the private in the front line against the brass hat; with the hodcarrier against the strawboss, or the walking delegate for that matter; with the laboratory worker against the stuffed shirt in a mortarboard; with the criminal against the cop. When I try to use my head it's somewhat different. People are you and me. As for allegiance; what I consider the good side of what's been going on among people on this continent since 1620 or thereabouts, has mine. And isn't there one of history's dusty attics called the Republic of Letters?

6. On the whole I'm all for the trend towards American self-consciousness in current writing. Of course any good thing gets run into the ground. I think there is enough real democracy in the very mixed American tradition to enable us, with courage and luck, to weather the social transformations that are now going on without losing all our liberties or the humane outlook that is the medium in which civilizations grow. The reaction to home-bred ways of thinking is a healthy defence against the total bankruptcy of Europe. As I have come to believe firmly that in politics the means tend to turn out to be more important than the ends, I think that the more our latent pragmatism and our cynicism in regard to ideas is stimulated the safer we will be.

7. My attitude towards a war would entirely depend on what I thought its internal results would be, though it's hard to conceive of a war that would have good results anywhere. But how would I know when it began? We live in a very odd period in human history when it's very difficult to make broad generalizations about events or to label them beforehand. Practically I'd probably try to get back my old job driving an ambulance.

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Allen Tate:

1. The question is ambiguous. It is phrased so that "usable past" can mean either a literary past or an historical and social past. Perhaps the best situation that a writer could be in would be that in which the literary and the historical past are identical. My own historical past was not incorporated into literary forms that I can take over and use, or use after some modification. For example, the only articulate literary tradition of the South that has been close to the life of most of the people is the folk tradition, which is perfectly vigorous today and which shows very little break with the European past; it witnesses a natural and gradual alteration under the conditions of American life; it is a model of what a literary tradition ought to be. But it is an incomplete tradition, and to confine oneself to it would be a deliberate act of naïveté; it would not bear the weight of the complex experience of modern life. While the historical past that I am conscious of is wholly American (that is to say, I could not possibly write on a European subject, past or present), the literary past that interests me is highly eclectic, and is more European than American, or in so far as it may be American it is an American literary past strongly influenced by consciousness of Europe. For example, until the time of Pound and Eliot, there are no American poets whose styles have been of any use to me; on the other hand, the English metaphysicals, certain Italian poets (Dante, Leopardi), and some modern French poets have been useful in working towards a style that is suitable to my own kind of American experience—more useful in fact than the New England poets or the poets of the Old South (including Poe) have been. It is my belief that a "regional" writer, such as I conceive myself to be, can draw upon the whole literary past, while a "national" writer in America at any rate, must be parochial, since his interest in a national essence leads him into the vice of "imitative form" on a large scale; that is, if he assumes the national essence is unique and crude, he must develop a style that is unique and crude; and there is, in this school (which stems from Whitman), the disadvantage that every writer must begin his career as if no literature had ever been written before. [Another disadvantage of our nationalist writer is that he cannot assume and make conscious, as Goethe did, an existing, homogeneous culture; he either naively assumes the "nationalism" of mere observation (Sandburg), or tries to pour myths into "America" from the top of his mind (Crane).] I place Mark Twain nearer to Augustus Longstreet than to Whitman; he was a regional writer in "Huckleberry Finn," and he mastered a subtly modulated style; compare this with the vulgarity of "The Gilded Age," written when Mark Twain had accepted the nationalist myth. At his best Twain was regional and universal; towards the end of his life he became national and parochial.

2. I conceive myself to be my own audience—which means that I am writing for other persons like myself; I thus assume that such persons

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exist. In certain ages writers may assume that they have an audience of a certain size; but that is very different from "aiming at a definite audience", on a definite level of intelligence and interest. There are always ideas, issues, problems; a writer may bring all his equipment to bear upon them; but again that is not aiming it at an audience, it is grappling with a problem.

3. In the fifteen years that I have been writing I have had three reviews and one essay that I learned something from. I have learned a great deal from conversation and correspondence. The corruption of the press, both right and left wing, has made our *public* literary criticism an isolated cult; but that does not mean that it is eccentric criticism; the central literary tradition is being fostered today by three or four journals whose combined circulation does not exceed three thousand.

4. To the first part of this question: No. To the second part: our situation, in which the writer is ignored by the big public, is better than the Russian and German situations, in which the traditional respect once paid to the profession of letters is perverted. The Europeans have always recognized the importance of literature; they are recognizing it now, even in Russia, by using press-gang methods to enlist men of letters in the army of socialist realism. It is better to be ignored.

5. I cannot see in my writing any *allegiance* to group, class, organization, region, religion, system of thought; it is profoundly *influenced* by all these aspects of "culture". I will not attempt to discuss this question systematically. I dislike Marxism, industrialism, finance capitalism, proletarianism, nationalism and internationalism; I like as *ideas* (I have not the privilege of participating in them as realities) producers' capitalism, peasants, the religious community (known today as regionalism) replacing both nationalism and internationalism, which are economic, not moral and religious conceptions); but I am not concerned with the question of realizing these preferences. As an imaginative writer looking for realities, I do not care to be either inside or outside a movement that is likely to succeed, or for that matter to fail. The success or failure of a political idea is none of my business; my business is to render in words the experience of people, whatever movement of ideas they may be caught up in. An artist who gets into a political movement because he thinks it is the coming thing, is a weakling; he has neither character nor intelligence.

6. The failure of proletarianism in literature and the rise of the Popular Front have doubtless accelerated the shift towards "literary nationalism"; to the literary nationalists of the twenties are added those Communists who are whooping it up for Democracy—and who are, of course, helping to liquidate themselves by also whooping it up for war. I am wholly unsympathetic towards literary nationalism of either the older or the newer

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variety. What I have already said under Question One comes in here. In one phase, literary nationalism is only the sectionalism of the East and Middle West trying to set up myths for the entire country. In another phase, it can be either finance capitalism or communism cutting across the profoundly regional differentiations of the country as a whole. Literary nationalism, as I see it, is the well-intended idealism of simpletons who are preparing the way for totalitarianism, capitalist or Marxist; I think the former.

7. I have considered the question. If possible—that is, unless I am badgered out of silence—I will keep my mouth shut about the war, and if I can make a living I will continue to carry out my literary plans. The writer, *as* writer, has no responsibility when war comes. The responsibility that he may have as a citizen is a question that he must decide for himself. The Popular Front is quite certain that a Marxist society would favor the growth of a great literature; perhaps the perfect Marxist society would do this—or it might do the exact opposite, by removing from social relations the dramatic tensions that are necessary to the arts. I doubt if a Marxist society would be any more favorable to literature than Nazism or finance capitalism. Nobody knows what kind of society is best for literature; the historical evidence seems to hint strongly that the societies of Dante and Shakespeare were the best literary situations. But it would be absurd to try to restore them for that reason, yet no more absurd than it is to try to convert writers to communism or Nazism with the plea that under either dispensation the arts would flourish. The committees and organizations devoted to the "defense of Culture" ask us to fight Germany for that reason; it may or may not be a good reason; but the real question involved is simply that no committee or organization knows enough about the arts to ask us to fight somebody in their behalf. It is my impression that these well-meaning persons want to make the world safe for writers (not writing); nothing could be sillier than that.

James T. Farrell:

1. The modern tradition of realism and naturalism. In my case, it has been partially American, but also, French, Russian, and Anglo-Irish. I might list among others, Dreiser, Lewis, Anderson, Hemingway, Lardner, Masters, Sandburg, Proust and Joyce. The question concerning James and Whitman seems to me to pose false alternatives. It is years since I have read anything of James, and my memory of what I have read is insufficiently fresh for me to say much about him. I will hazard the guess that he is likely to have a healthy disciplinary influence and to be technically

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fertile to writers. In certain particulars, he is more of our time than Whitman: thus the psychological relativism in his characterizations, and the more sophisticated conception of Time in his work. Whitman should always have a profound and salutary moral value. He emphasized many of the right things, comradeship, positive science, materialism, freedom from pruriency, naturalism and spontaneity in the human being. But he was the victim of his own breadth. His all-inclusiveness left him undiscriminating. Thus, one often gets the impression that he did not know when he was good and when he wasn't as a poet. He was indiscriminate in the values he often places on objects in the world and experiences which he described in his poetry. At times he seemed to be all for experience, and too little for the organization of it. His mysticism is untenable. The democracy of which he wrote was already being washed into the historic past during his own lifetime. His ideology as a whole is now only a historic curiosity. It is interesting to observe that present day poets who reveal a strong Whitmanesque influence are limited in scope and outlook. They cannot take over his ideology and develop it further because it has been cast aside by history. In consequence, they must confine themselves to folk details, and when they generalize, they seem sentimental and often, they even descend to bathos. We cannot blame Whitman for his disciples, but at times, his disciples have found in him a justification for indiscipline, and even for the Philistine anti-intellectualism whch they cling to. Whitman has already been retroactively admitted to the Communist Party, and the People's Front, and such a business merely constitutes an abortion on both history and literary critcism. It is as silly as the efforts of the Daladiers to drape themselves in the mantles of Robespierre and Danton.

2. It is fatal for an author to conceive of himself as writing for a definite audience when he seeks to create literature. I think that he should try to tell the truth. I think that the audience for serious writing was growing at the beginning of the present decade, but that it is now shrinking. The present is an intensely reactionary period. Reaction, the influence of Hollywood, the existence of political and religious pressure groups, the many confusions of the present, such are the causes tending to narrow down the audience for serious literature today.

3. Yes, I think that the practice of "serious literary criticism" has become "an isolated cult". The influence of Commerce is of course a basic cause, and part of that influence is manifested directly or indirectly through Hollywood. Taste is corrupted. More and more, there is a tendency to insulate books that are too truthful from the public. The liberal weeklies have abandoned their function in literary criticism as in politics. The editorship of both *The Nation* and *The New Republic* is in the hands of renegades from liberalism, and the literary editor of *The New Republic* is a triple renegade: from liberalism, from socialism, and from literary values. At times, there are contributions to this section which can only be

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described by the word, *vulgarity*. The main cause of such a state of affairs is political pressure. Continually, both literary sections show a Stalinist bias. The only interesting section of either magazine is the correspondence column where one finds intelligent criticisms of the editorial policies. If both magazines abandoned their literary sections and used the space thus saved to enlarge their correspondence columns, they would have infinitely more interesting and valuable issues. The literary sections are no better than the Sunday literary supplements, and the latter cost less.

4. I make my living from writing, but that is a precarious livelihood. It seems as if our present economic system has less and less place for literature as a profession. Hollywood is the introduction of the factory system in the field of the arts, and its influence is corrupting.

5. I want my writing to have allegiance to what I think is true.

6. There was an energetic and healthy realistic tendency in American writing during the early years of this decade. It took a leftward turn and was informed by a critical spirit. Continual attempts were made to politicalize this tendency. Among the critics most vocal in this effort were Granville Hicks, Michael Gold, and Joseph Freeman. But these men have now abandoned everything they then asserted with such irritating dogmatism. This, plus the silence of so many of the younger writers whom they praised is, in itself, an epitaph of that effort. The attempt to politicalize literature continues under the banner of the Popular Front. But it uses a new demagogy. Under the guise of defending culture, Popular Frontism abandons literary criteria of judgement, inflates many mediocre and even commercial writers beyond their merits, re-emphasizes anachronistic literary movements such as Populism, and turns literary criticism into a welter of political sentimentalities. It heads directly into cultural and literary nationalism. I am opposed to this literary nationalism. In our day, intellect, thought, science, art must be international. Literary nationalism and Popular Frontism leads to such ineptitudes and feats of political legerdemain as the retroactive admission of Emerson, Whitman, even the late Mary Austin, into the Popular Front. It is a method of assuming literary gains in terms of inches, when losses are being sustained by miles. It collects inconsistencies all along the line as it grows, and it affords the Philistine countless excuses for his Philistinism. It substitutes conventionalizations and demagogy for serious social protest in literature. It does all this in the name of a false unity. The answer for those who bitterly attack the honest artist for rejecting this fictitious unity is to be found in a remark of James Connolly. Once when asked about unity with such men as Redmond, he said: "Unity is a good thing, but honesty is better, and if we can only have unity at the expense of honesty, then unity is not worth the price we are asked to pay for it." One of the most precious values in the world today is that of the critical spirit. The current

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tendency toward a cultural nationalism threatens to destroy that spirit. The present wave of literary nationalism does not merely demand a renewed emphasis on the specifically American elements in our culture. It falsifies the meaning and background of these elements, and it twists our history to fit partisan political needs of the present. It demands thinking in shibboleths and catch words which is not thinking at all. The best of twentieth century American literature describes American life, and it is many-sided. But it is critical in spirit. And that critical spirit is under attack; it is being poisoned and perverted, turned into the hand-maiden of political interests, and bankrupt political programs. In consequence some writers who have been engulfed in this wave are turning themselves into literary cops. They seem, in certain instances, to be well on the way toward constituting themselves a self-appointed F.B.I. of the spirit of man, and of the spirit of a free modern literature.

7. It is difficult for me to answer your last question because the real estate business has never been my *metier*. Personally, I have no economic interests in Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, the Argentine, Cuba, Haiti, San Salvador, Tunisia, Corsica, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tientsin, Singapore, the Yangtze-Kiang River, the Road to Mandalay, Mongolia, Teschen, Budapest, the Ukraine, Danzig, Iceland, Finland, Greenland, Nova Scotia, Constantinople, Alsace Lorraine, or Guam, not to mention the Suez Canal, Ethiopia, or the Island of Yap. Of course, many tell us that the British Navy is required to protect our freedom. But this is one joke that the Farrells, the Brennans, the Kellys, the Sullivans, the O'Tooles, the Sweeneys, the Gannons, the Bannons, and the Murphys could never get the point of. It all reminds me of the story that Max Nomad tells about the Albanian. During the last war, someone asked an Albanian how he felt about the war. He replied: "What? Two dogs are fighting for a bone, and you ask the bone how it feels?"

Kenneth Fearing:

Some of these questions are certainly pertinent to the times, and are well formulated. Others, though sufficiently provocative, seemed marked by a sort of Wodehouse redundancy. And still others, part of three, and possibly seven, are so framed as to arouse the suspicion you may be attempting to extend and further confuse one or another of those familiar political schisms that are, to most writers, so overwhelmingly dreary and fruitless. I hope not; but if you are, my answers are not intended to abet the effort. To reply, then, in detail:

1. I am conscious, in my own writing, that I avail myself of a cultural

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past. I believe it to be chiefly American, but I cannot say, and doubt that any writer can, with certainty, say where intuitive selection leaves off and deliberate, or conscious selection begins. Other "figures" in my usable past are English poetry and fiction, German music, and certain French and German cartoonists. As between Henry James and Walt Whitman, I think the latter is more important to the present and future of American writing.

2. When I am engaged in the business of writing I do not have any particular audience in mind. When I am not writing, I can afford to realize that every writer must have in mind, whether precisely or vaguely, an audience of people who have approximately his own background, experience, and temperament. Otherwise, communication would be a dull and thankless thing to attempt, if not impossible to establish. My own audience (fortunately for me) could be described as liberal middle-class. Whether or not an audience for serious literature has grown hinges too much on personal illusion, and varying concepts as to what constitutes first rank literature, to be quite answerable. The taste of the reading public has changed, and will change, that is certain. But in numbers it is probably little larger than it was ten years ago.

3. With the present set-up of the book industry, in which the fundamental purpose of nearly all of its literary columns, supplements, and magazines is the promotion of the sale of books, a creative writer who did not evaluate the criticism his work receives mainly according to this standard would go quite mad. Personally, I have no great complaint to make on either of the two standards this implies, neither on the standard of promotion, nor with respect to the understanding and honesty, generally, with which my books have been reviewed. Your question as to whether literary criticism is a cult boils down, I think, to this: Just how serious does literary criticism have to be before it is really serious? The general level of it keeps pace with the general taste of the public. Otherwise it would fail of its basic purpose: Promotion.

And as to whether political pressures have further isolated criticism; *Partisan Review's* rather isolated attack upon my recent *Dead Reckoning* gives you a lovely opportunity to answer this one all by yourself.*

4. I have not ever, quite, been able to live solely by the returns brought in by creative writing, but I know that it can be done, at least for a time, or possibly from time to time. Many writers do it.

5. My reply to the second question covers this one also, for me.

*Mr. Fearing is evidently referring to R. P. Blackmur's omnibus review of nine new books of verse in our Winter, 1939, issue. Those who have followed Mr. Blackmur's critical writing will realize that it is absurd to charge him with playing the kind of political game Mr. Fearing has in mind. And we think that Mr. Fearing, if he re-reads Mr. Blackmur's review, will be unable to make any correlation between Mr. Blackmur's evaluation of these nine poets and their political views.—THE EDITORS.

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6. At the risk of being banal, I will have to say that American literature since 1930 has been marked as a whole by an increased economic awareness which has expressed itself, politically, in a heightened partisanship for one or another organization, vogue, or tradition favoring the cause of the economically exploited and insecure. I believe that although a good deal of such writing staggered and all but fell beneath the burden of its message, this by-now familiar battle was a necessary and healthy one, with results that are satisfying at the present date. As for contemporary trends toward literary nationalism, critical or uncritical, I am not aware of any, apart from the tendencies, traditional today, implicit and explicit in the work of Walt Whitman, and possibly expressed before him. If, though, you mean by "specifically American elements in our culture" the larger principles of American democracy, which most of us fondly believe (I know it's an illusion) to be America's unique and exclusive contribution to social evolution, then I think that recently there has been still more emphasis placed upon them, and I am very much in favor of both the principles and this trend.

7. I have considered the possible entry of the United States into the next world war. And I have tried, often, to calculate what sort of a war it will be—whether along the lines of 1914-18, or along the course it is taking now, and that is a series of civil wars, wars of the type by which the ruling class of all Europe succeeded in the conquest of Spain. Either course is possible, and if it is the latter, it seems likely today that France has been selected as the next arena. Should it become so, most American writers ought to and will duplicate the aid they gave to loyalist Spain. If, on the other hand, a 1914 war should eventuate I would, personally, urge that the U. S. give every material aid to any and every enemy of the axis powers, without, at the same time, omitting any opportunity to call attention to the cockroach nature of the present British and French governments.

In any event, although it is certain that there is no reliable Ouija board in my family, that the fate of the world does not hang upon whatever word comes from my typewriter, that no one knows precisely where wishful-thinking leaves off and realistic possibilities begin, and that these abstract speculations are in the end little more than a nuisance, it is clear that the writer's responsibility is to tell the truth as he sees it. And that means, today, that if democratic processes are to be preserved and extended (there is no guarantee that they will be) writers and artists are the decisive factor in their defense and development. The literature of today controls at least some of the guns of tomorrow. And finally, any writer who promotes the concept of freedom of thought and action for larger and still larger masses of the people is loyal to the democratic idea, while any who distorts, disrupts, or denies it is a traitor to it.

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Katherine Anne Porter:

1. All my past is "usable," in the sense that my material consists of memory, legend, personal experience and acquired knowledge. They combine in a constant process of re-creation. I am quite unable to separate the influence of literature or the history of literary figures from influences of background, upbringing, ancestry; or to say just what is American and what is not. On one level of experience and a very important one, I could write an autobiography based on my reading until I was twenty-five.

Henry James and Walt Whitman are relevant to the past and present of American literature or of any other literature. They are world figures, they are both artists, it is better not to mortgage the future by excluding either. Be certain that if the present forces and influences bury either of them, the future will dig him up again. The James-minded and the Whitman-minded people have both the right to their own kind of nourishment.

For myself I choose James, holding as I do with the conscious, disciplined artist, the serious expert against the expansive, indiscriminately "cosmic" sort. James, I believe, was the better workman, the more advanced craftsman, a better thinker, a man with a heavier load to carry than Whitman. His feelings are deeper and more complex than Whitman's; he had more confusing choices to make, he faced and labored over harder problems. I am always thrown off by arm-waving and shouting, I am never convinced by breast-beating or huge shapeless statements of generalized emotion. In particular, I think the influence of Whitman on certain American writers has been disastrous, for he encourages them in the vices of self-love (often disguised as love of humanity, or the working classes, or God) the assumption of prophetic powers, of romantic superiority to the limitations of craftsmanship, inflated feeling and slovenly expression.

Neither James nor Whitman is more relevant to the present and future of American literature than, say, Hawthorne or Melville, Stephen Crane or Emily Dickinson; or for that matter, any other first rank poet or novelist or critic of any time or country. James or Whitman? The young writer will only confuse himself, neglect the natural sources of his education as artist, cramp the growth of his sympathies, by lining up in such a scrimmage. American literature belongs to the great body of world literature, it should be varied and free to flow into what channels the future shall open; all attempts to limit and exclude at this early day would be stupid, and I sincerely hope, futile. If a young artist must choose a master to admire and emulate, that choice should be made according to his own needs from the widest possible field and after a varied experience of study. By then perhaps he shall have seen the folly of choosing a master. One suggestion: artists are not political candidates; and art is not an arena for gladiatorial contests.

2. In the beginning I was not writing for any audience, but spent a great while secretly and with great absorption trying to master a craft, to find a

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medium; my respect for this medium and the masters of it—no two of them alike—is very great. My search was all for the clearest and most arresting way to tell the things I wished to tell. I still do not write for any definite audience, though perhaps I have in mind a kind of composite reader.

It appears to me that the audience for serious American writing has grown in the past ten years. This opinion is based on my own observation of an extended reputation, a widening sphere of influence, an increasing number of readers, among poets, novelists, and critics of our first rank.

It is true that I place great value on certain kinds of perceptive criticism but neither praise nor blame affects my actual work, for I am under a compulsion to write as I do; when I am working I forget who approved and who dispraised, and why. The worker in an art is dyed in his own color, it is useless to ask him to change his faults or his virtues; he must, rather more literally than most men, work out his own salvation. No novelist or poet could possibly ask himself, while working: "What will a certain critic think of this? Will this be acceptable to my publisher? Will this do for a certain magazine? Will my family and friends approve of this?" Imagine what that would lead to. . . . And how much worse, if he must be thinking, "What will my political cell or block think of this? Am I hewing to the party line? Do I stand to lose my job, or head, on this?" This is really the road by which the artist perishes.

3. As to criticism being an isolated cult, for the causes you suggest or any other, serious literary criticism was never a crowded field; it cannot be produced by a formula or in bulk any more than can good poetry or fiction. It is not, any more than it ever was, the impassioned concern of a huge public. Proportionately to number, both of readers and publishers, there are as many good critics who have a normal audience, as ever. We are discussing the art of literature and the art of criticism, and this has nothing to do with the vast industry of copious publishing, and hasty reviewing, under pressure from the advertising departments, or political pressure. It is a pernicious system: but I surmise the same kind of threat to freedom in a recently organized group of revolutionary artists who are out to fight and suppress if they can, all "reactionary" artists—that is, all artists who do not subscribe to their particular political faith.

4. No, there has not been a living in it, so far. The history of literature, musical composition, painting shows there has never been a living in art, except by flukes of fortune; by weight of long, cumulative reputation, or generosity of a patron; a prize, a subsidy, a commission of some kind; or (in the American style) anonymous and shamefaced hackwork; in the English style, a tradition of hackwork, openly acknowledged if deplored. The grand old English hack is a melancholy spectacle perhaps, but a figure not without dignity. He is a man who sticks by his trade, does the best he can with it on its own terms, and abides by the consequences of

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his choice, with a kind of confidence in his way of life that has some merit, certainly.

Literature as a profession? It *is* a profession, and the professional literary man is on his own as any other professional man is.

If you mean, is there any place in our present economic system for the practice of literature as a source of steady income and economic security, I should say, no. There never has been, in any system, any guarantee of economic security for the artist, unless he took a job and worked under orders as other men do for a steady living. You simply cannot secure your bread and your freedom of action too. You cannot be a hostile critic of society and expect society to feed you regularly. The artist of the present day is demanding (I think childishly) that he be given, free, a great many irreconcilable rights and privileges. He wants as a right freedoms which the great spirits of all time have had to fight and often to die for. If he wants freedom, let him fight and die for it too, if he must, and not expect it to be handed to him on a silver plate.

5. I find my writing reveals all sorts of sympathies and interests which I had not formulated exactly to myself; "the expression of myself as an individual" has never been my aim. My whole attempt has been to discover and understand human motives, human feelings, to make a distillation of what human relations and experiences my mind has been able to absorb. I have never known an uninteresting human being, and I have never known two alike; there are broad classifications and deep similarities, but I am interested in the thumb print. I am passionately involved with these individuals who populate all these enormous migrations, calamities; who fight wars and furnish life for the future; these beings without which, one by one, all the "broad movements of history" could never take place. One by one—as they were born.

6. Political tendency since 1930 has been to the last degree a confused, struggling, drowning-man-and-straw sort of thing, stampede of panicked crowd, each man trying to save himself—one at a time trying to work out his horrible confusions. How do I feel about it? I suffer from it, and I try to work my way out to some firm ground of personal belief, as the others do. I have times of terror and doubt and indecision, I am confused in all the uproar of shouting maddened voices and the flourishing of death-giving weapons. . . . I should like to save myself, but I have no assurance that I can, for if the victory goes as it threatens, I am not on that side. The third clause of this question I find biased. Let me not be led away by your phrase "largely uncritical" in regard to the "emphasis on specifically American" elements in our culture. If we become completely uncritical and nationalistic, it will be the most European state of mind we could have. I hope we may not. I hope we shall have balance enough to see ourselves plainly, and choose what we shall keep and what discard according to our own needs; not be rushed into fanatic self-love and self-praise as a

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defensive measure against assaults from abroad. I think the "specifically American" things might not be the worst things for us to cultivate, since this is America, and we are Americans, and our history is not altogether disgraceful. The parent stock is European, but this climate has its own way with transplantations, and I see no cause for grievance in that.

7. I am a pacifist. I should like to say now, while there is still time and place to speak, without inviting immediate disaster (for I love life), to my mind the responsibility of the artist towards society is the plain and simple responsibility of any other human being, for I refuse to separate the artist from the human race: his prime responsibility "when and if war comes" is not to go mad. Madness takes many subtle forms, it is the old deceiver. I would say, don't be betrayed into all the old outdated mistakes. If you are promised something new and blissful at the mere price of present violence under a new master, first examine these terms carefully. New ideas call for new methods, the old flaying, drawing, and quartering for the love of God and the King will not do. If the method is the same, trust yourself, the idea is old, too. If you are required to kill some one today, on the promise of a political leader that some one else shall live in peace tomorrow, believe me, you are not only a double murderer, you are a suicide, too.

Wallace Stevens:

1. The material of the imagination is reality and reality can be nothing else except the usable past. In my own case this is wholly an American past. However, it does not follow that this or that particular figure of the past is relevant to the future. It is just as easy to be diffident about James as it is to be diffident about Whitman. I suppose you have chosen these two figures as symbols; neither of them means anything to me. The projections of the past are as incalculable as the stock market; otherwise it would be nothing but a bore.

2. I do not visualize any audience. To me poetry is one of the sanctions of life and I write it because it helps me to accept and validate my experience. Writing poetry is one thing; publishing it is another. Often I wish that I did not publish it, because the act of publishing it invokes a seriousness different from the seriousness of writing it. I think that the audience for serious American writing must have grown in the last ten years.

3. Much of the criticism one receives is a good deal keener than people

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who have not been subjected to the same thing can know. Besides, critics are perhaps the most important part of one's audience. I doubt if business and political pressures influence the criticism of poetry to any considerable extent. The Marxist point of view is exclusive, and I suppose that extremists encounter a good deal of opposition, but that there is anything corrupt about the opposition is something else.

4. I have not tried to make a living by writing. However, the fact that writers commonly take advantage of "such crutches as teaching and editorial work" is nothing that entitles writers to indulge themselves in spasms of self-pity. Most people avail themselves of crutches of one sort or another: lawyers promote business enterprises; doctors marry rich women and buy and sell securities. I think that there is a place in the present economic system for literature as a profession.

5. Unquestionably and notwithstanding the fact that I indulge in a good deal of abstraction, I do not regard my poems as mainly an expression of myself, nor as modern in the sense in which that unpleasant commonplace is so frequently used. Still, some time ago, when I sent one of my books to an honest man in England, he wrote to me saying that he found it personal and modern, and that these qualities were not his dish of tea.

6. I don't believe in factitious Americanism. An American has to be an American because there is nothing else for him to be and also, I hope, because it would not matter if there was. Even so, I believe in forgetting about it except as a quality, a savor.

7. I don't think that the United States should enter into the next world war, if there is to be another, unless it does so with the idea of dominating the world that comes out of it, or unless it is required to enter it in self-defense. The question respecting the responsibility of writers in war is a very theoretical question respecting an extremely practical state of affairs. A war is a military state of affairs, not a literary one. Conceding that the propagandists don't agree, does it matter that they don't agree? The role of the writer in war remains the fundamental role of the writer intensified and concentrated.

Gertrude Stein:

I am afraid the questions are not the kind that interest me a lot but I have written down an answer to each one anyway.

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1. Usable for what, cannot worry about the future of American writing, the present is enough, and any American is American.

2. An audience is pleasant if you have it, it is flattering and flattering is agreeable always, but if you have an audience the being an audience is their business, they are the audience you are the writer, let each attend to their own business.

3. After all if it is written and presumably what you write is written before it is criticised then criticism is bound to come too late always. To the rest of the question it is the same.

4. I suppose if I had had to make a living I should have, I do not know, how can you tell.

5. I am not interested.

6. Writers only think they are interested in politics, they are not really, it gives them a chance to talk and writers like to talk but really no real writer is really interested in politics.

7. It does not seem possible for any of you to realise that most probably there will not be another general European war, the more America thinks there is going to be one the more suspicious the continent gets and the less likely they are to fight. Anyway they are not at all likely to do so but if they were to then the writers would have to fight too like anybody else, some will like it and some will not.

William Carlos Williams:

1. Yes, most assuredly, I am conscious in everything I write of a usable past, a past as alive in its day as every moment is today alive in me: Work therefore as different from mine as one period can be different from another, but in spite of that preserving between the two an identity upon which I feed. In all work in any period there is a part that is the life of it which relates to whatever else is alive, yesterday, today and forever. To discover that in past work makes that work important to me. How can we say that the work of Henry James is more relevant to the present and

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future of American writing than the writing of Walt Whitman, or vice versa? The only question of any relevance in either case is, Was that work alive to its own day? If so then it is alive every day. If it was a palpable denial of its own day then—if I can discover it as such—out with it. I want to look in a work and see in it a day like my own, of altered shapes, colors, but otherwise the same. *That* I can use to reinforce my senses and my intelligence to go on discovering in my own day such things as those old boys had the courage and intelligence to discover in theirs. Let's omit the matter of art, the art, that is, to set down what they saw and experienced and DIDN'T lie about—for any reason.

2. No, I don't think of myself as writing for any definite audience. I write for a potential intelligence. I believe there's a bigger audience for what I write than ever gets to hear that I exist. In that I have lived a few years longer than formerly more people have come to read my stuff. Therefore there is a larger audience for serious American writing than formerly. I believe also that there is a larger audience in general for unofficial writing than there was ten years ago. It isn't much larger but it is, I believe, a little larger than formerly. This is due to a variety of things unrelated to writing itself. The present administration in Washington has done a tremendous work in illuminating the minds of men and women who will think and who are capable of thought. There is, I believe, a slight edge of people in my own suburb for instance who are beginning vaguely to believe that a cubist, let us say, isn't for that a thief, a pervert and a dangerous communist. They even surreptitiously go to the public library and (when no one is looking) sneak my awful books out under their coats—and, I am told, snicker and chortle to themselves in their closets over what I have written saying, so I'm told, By God, that's true!

3. I place no value at all on the criticism my work has received if the puerilities of public statement (which have to be such to be printed) are in question. But I have received extremely valuable criticisms by word of mouth from the same gentlemen who write often so stalely of me in the papers. Most criticism is first poised to praise or to injure before the man thinks. We are all guilty. Few know what writing is about. Those that do, find little or no audience for what they have to say. There ought to be a guild—supported by the government!! Certainly the literary supplements have been corrupted by the advertisers. Oh, it isn't just a question of the publisher and the advertiser sticking tongues out at each other over the back fence, it's subtler than that. Take Williams College, for instance and the controversies over what its President shall think and do. It's all very polite but the virulence underneath is very thinly covered. A literary supplement isn't there to teach. It's there to sell. To sell it's got to sell what people want to buy. Also it has to sell a bale of literature every week. That's infantile. There isn't that much literature produced in a century. So by January 7 each year all the superlatives are exhausted. You've already

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said this or that biography by this or that doctor or returned missionary is the cat's meow. So what? It's the cat's meow and that's an end to it. If a fine piece of work comes out (by purest accident) on January 14 you're up chit creek. Nothing to say and no words left to say it in. It's the advertisers, of course, but only because advertisers talk to the same brow beaten audience that the writers and reviewers are approaching and driving into a corner. The meek man who dares to say, I am dying of thirst in this desert, must be a fool.

4. Make a living writing what I want? I should say not! It costs me money. Yes, there is a place in our economic system for literature as a profession but all the elevators are broken down. Nobody can get up there. It's too high. One life is not long enough for a man to make the ascent in. But maybe it's best so. Maybe there are no great writers today. As if I didn't all the time think that if—that if only—I, I, I haven't it in me to be as great in literature as J. P. Morgan is in Wall Street and the . . . what of it? I write.

5. In retrospect my writing reveals plenty of allegiances—to the grammar school ideals of my public school bringing up. You know, no sooner a child is born than he begins to learn. I was early indoctrinated into the gang spirit of my 8 and 10 year old pals. I have never forgotten that thrilling world with all its magnificent hopes and determinations. Me and Dante loved at the age of—well, anyway she was about 9 at the time. I have never forgotten that, nor the meetings of the Star Athletic Club. That all meant something. There were things I learned in my father's own Unitarian Sunday School to which I owe the staunchest allegiance today. Then I have been tremendously impressed with the past of the United States. That's deep in my blood. Nothing has displaced one bit of my emotion—the regular 4th of July stuff! that I once felt so strongly. In my world there are no classes but the good guys and the bastards. No, I don't think of my writing as the expression merely of an individual, never. Who the hell am I? But I am passionately one, not of a writers' group, but with a potential right feeling and thinking man of the world, the kernel of all groups, the best one in all times and places, whom I conceive of as having patience, tolerance, no prejudices whatever but a keen sense for values. I still believe that such men can get along together in peace and work out a livable world. If not, there's little meaning to the whole business. I can be a savage too. Cut and dried schemes mean nothing to me. They lead only to stupidity of action, to dullness and self deceit. I'm very little interested in what the other fellow "thinks". I believe in giving Russia a break—if it will use peaceable means to its ends. That's their business, not mine. It may be mine tomorrow, if they do well.

6. The political tendency of American writing as a whole since 1930 and thirty years before has been toward a discovery of the terms of a discus-

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sion and declaration in the only world it can know, that under its nose. When it has succeded in knowing what it is talking about in those terms it may possibly begin to interest the man of alert senses (Henry Adams) who already knows the world but would be glad to see it correlated by the artist (the writer) in some new sort of creative composition. "Literary nationalism" is a confusion in terms due to bandy-legged and cross-eyed witnesses to what is before them. It hides under its blatancies the very much neglected fact that when a man sees and apprehends with his mind what is before him in America that which he sees there must perforce be American. Give stupidity any name you please, call it American, British or even German, it's still stupidity. We're not talking about that. A renewed interest in specifically "American" elements in our culture (provided they are related in the mind to general culture) would be the beginning of any basic understanding of literature among us.

7. If war comes we've got to fight. Writing would be secondary. The one thing to guard against would be the tendency to become a liar for propaganda's sake. That difficulty always faces a man. If I had to be shot, I'd hope fervently that the guys at the other end would make an artistic job of it by shooting straight. The value always comes out, in one form or another, if we stick to our guns. Meanwhile, long live in America the memory of Eugene Debs!

John Peale Bishop:

1. I am conscious of a usable past, though whether the use I have made of that consicousness is one of which others can approve is more than I ought to say. In so far as this past is a part of my own memory, it is, of course, American. Because I was born and brought up in a portion of the border South which had had complete experience of Civil War, but which had partially escaped Reconstruction, I have had access to an older America than most of my contemporaries. I have known, not through documents, but through sight and touch and smell a way of living that belonged to the early Republic. Indeed, when I remember certain people I have known, old when I was very young, and recall all I have heard them say, it seems to me that I can stretch, not only my mind, but my body as well into the eighteenth century. But aside from these recollections, which are important only because they are personal, it can also be said that for me, as for any American, the past of America is as long as that of modern Europe. It should not be forgotten that, though America was settled by Europeans, Europe as we know it could never have come into existence

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without America. The part played by this country in creating contemporary Europe is too potent to be ignored. The relations between the two continents are immensely complicated. And it is because no man of comparable intelligence has applied himself so assiduously as Henry James to exploring these relations that his work, aside from its great value as art, seems to me important. Walt Whitman's direct expression of Americanism would be of equal value, if it were equally convincing. To me Whitman never carries the conviction when he is being conscious of nothing but that he is an American as when, unconsciously American, he sings of love and death. Then he is a poet and what he has to say should have quite as much poetic weight for a European as for an American. Whereas James, I strongly suspect, is unintelligible to any but an American. It is a comfort that America of the mid-nineteenth century produced writers of their stature, but I cannot believe that the work of either Whitman or James is particularly relevant to the future of American writing. The problems which they faced in their time remain, however, in our own, to say what America is and to say what its relation to Europe.

America is continuous in time with Europe, though separate in space, as Russia is contiguous in space with European civilization but disparate in time. Our remote past is, then, in Europe. This is a matter of some importance. For it means that if we are to seek a consciousness of the continuity of time, we cannot look for it on this continent.

2. It is convenient to write for those who you know will read you, as it is to talk only to those who you know will listen to you. I should say that I am conscious of writing for three people: Allen Tate, Edmund Wilson and my wife. I have at one time and another pleased all three. But I have never yet pleased all of them with the same piece of writing.

The audience for serious American writing has certainly grown in the last twenty years. It has probably increased in the last decade. Whether the audience for literary criticism has diminished within that time, I cannot say, but there is no doubt that the space allotted to it by editors has been much reduced. This reflects, so far as the editors of the liberal weeklies are concerned, a real shift of interest, not only on their part, but that of their readers. For while, in the decade after the war, almost all literary values were in for a revaluation, it is now political and social ideas that are in a state of ferment.

3. Any criticism of a man's work represents at least one reader's reaction, and for that reason, if no other, he must regard it seriously. To speak strictly, there are not many critics whose opinions I place highly and I know, or think I know, what each of them is worth. And yet I should lie if I did not say that I am always pleased by praise and, out of all proportion, hurt by its opposite.

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4. I have not found it possible to make a living by such writing as I can do. Others have done so. There are no poets among them. At best, the profession of letters under our present economic system is in the extreme precarious. And no one, who can possibly avoid it, should adopt it.

5. I have always believed that literature should oppose to any system, no matter how perfectly conceived, the "minute particulars of mankind". The mind craves nothing so much as a closed system, and the writer's mind is no exception; and yet he should, at whatever cost of violence, constantly set against any system, which at the moment is approved, the spontaneity and variety of life. In no other way can he bring his conscience to rest.

All authentic writing comes from an individual; but a final judgment of it will depend, not on how much individuality it contains, but how much of common humanity.

6. The political tendency of writing in America since 1930 has been toward the left. But the tendency of political writing, from right to left, has been toward a redefinition of democracy. I do not believe that Communism is a desirable or a possible aim. I do not believe that it is desirable for it still holds to the conception of the economic man, from which most of the ills of Capitalism seem to me to rise. I do not believe it possible, for I do not think that Communism is an aim at all. It is beginning, not end. It is the original chaos out of which some social order or other must rise. And since events since 1917 would seem to show that the order which follows an attempt to establish Communism in the contemporary world will conform in greater or less degree to Fascism, I am for continuing our own experiment in democracy, rather than for clearing the ground for a social experiment of another sort. I am not unaware of the difficulties which at present confront our democracy, but I am convinced that they are not insurmountable. I share many of the misgivings as regards democracy which were owned by those who designed our government; but they do not seem to me important compared with the certainty that no other society would do for us at all. Democracy is not a magic word, which we have only to utter to have the rocks fall apart and the robbers' cave open for us, filled with all imaginable riches. It is a way of life which in the future, as in the past, will depend less upon its own virtue than upon ours.

An American writer should find American material richer than any other. But that does not mean it is richer for being American. It may be, in human terms, very poor indeed. The men and women along Tobacco Road are as American as they can be. In Erskine Caldwell's hands, they became excellent literary creatures. But even in his hands, they remain as men and women appalling in their poverty.

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Harold Rosenberg:

1. What is a "usable past"? The phrase seems to me most intelligible if it is taken to mean a literary tendency to which a writer deliberately attaches his own work in order to modify it. Thus Thomas Mann consciously *uses* the romantic movement of the 19th century, and Eliot French symbolism and English metaphysical poetry.

For an original artist this is a very peculiar orientation, not far removed from that of the academicians. The writer stands outside his work and builds it up from carefully selected materials. His posture implies a readiness to regard himself as a representative figure, a literary landmark. It implies also that the professional literary practice has been raised to the level of a philosophy—a philosophy of the practical value of Art. One sets out to use (and change) the past of literature in the interests of its future; and through this one hopes to change the world.

Merely to imitate, even to imitate persistently certain selected models, is not to "use" the past in this sense. Imitation is more naive than such using, has a closer resemblance to life itself. Long before we have cultural, or even conscious aims, we imitate. And the writer who does not seek primarily to affect the history of literature tends to live in his work rather than to use it. Baudelaire establishes himself inside of Poe as a base of operations; he apes him but does not use him. Through Poe he achieves a heightened sense of himself, whereas the "users" are always talking of the "self-abnegation of the Artist." Despite his deep and luminous consciousness, Baudelaire is simple in his mimicry, which absorbs Poe into a present act of knowing. I still find much human appeal in the writer who is conscious by means of the past though not of the past as a means.

Another distinction is that imitation is always of individuals, while to elect a section of the past as usable indicates an intent to capture and exploit, for the sake of special interests, a specific historical area. In short, the whole idea of "usable past" is shot through with the politics of art.

The American cultural past consists of the total results of a combined official using and inspired individual aping of the European past. Beginning with Independence, American writers and artists have behaved in the native tradition by exchanging in rotation the following masters: British and French classicism, Rhenish romanticism, the Great of All Ages (Transcendentalism), Italian classicism (mainly in sculpture), French realism (social and psychological), French symbolism, etcetera. In America, though not in Europe, to be an American has always meant to be a properly dated European. Today, for instance, some people believe it means to be a Russian or German patriot.

Outside this American culture—always under two or more flags—have lived the millions of native and immigrant americans who missed the chance to study with Thorwaldsen or at the Ecole des Beaux Arts or to enjoy the regulation Wanderjahre at Göttingen and Montmartre. These

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frontiersmen, tillers of soil, and builders of towns have been for the main part neither Americans nor non-Americans in the cultural sense—because their culture has been a home made, transitional folk mores, without national scope, or they have had no culture at all, except for racial or sectarian remnants (Pennsylvania Germans, Huguenots, Mexican, Scandinavian, Negro, Mormon, Quaker). These lower case americans have been and remain "aliens". Their culture exists in the future not in the past.

Because the cultured Americans have been, almost exclusively, members of the upper class, while the americans are workers and farmers, storekeepers and country doctors, many writers today believe that the "soil" and the folk is more Revolutionary, as well as more American, than the library, the museum and the idea. This is a very serious mistake. The most brutal and philistine american executive-type is also opposed instinctively to European art and literature, and likes to stage himelf as a plain guy, a member of the cultural rank and file. And in literature itself the "people's writers", from Mark Twain to Sinclair Lewis, merely *start* with the soil; they climb in the direction of the Academy, which, as the antithesis of the real but uncultured folk, is also neither American nor European but merely an upper class sublimation of unreality.

On the other hand, writers like Poe, Whitman, or James, who take off from the contrast and tension between Europe and America, remain equally relevant, whether they move East, West, or up and down. America can be known only through the perspective of international culture. Conversely, it can understand world ideas only if it applies them to itself.

Every writer today who is worth anything shows in some way the influence of the overturn that took place in American prose and poetry via Gertrude Stein and others. I wish to characterise this movement as essentially an aristocratic (European-minded American) aping of american proletarian speech. (Examples: Stein, Pound, Eliot, Stevens, Moore, Cummings.) This writing, which at its best goes much farther in the direction of both aural accuracy and literary associations than Whitman's private lingo, represents a synthesis, a new era in American self-consciousness and consciousness of the world. Our living language is brought into focus with the living literature of the past; it need not fear that looking back to the masterpieces of Europe and antiquity will turn it into a pillar of salt. On the other hand, American letters need strive no longer to shape every experience into a plaster of Paris model of a European original. Through bringing its major social element into play, American culture has begun to develop an identity of its own.

Already, however, in novels, Hollywood, Broadway, this experimental "cultural-proletarian" language is being academicised, cleaned up, made "natural" (example, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*), made 100% American, i.e. zero.

2. A writer remains alive so long as he postulates the existence of a section of the population whose cultural dynamism is at least equal to his

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own, and whose influence is or will become dominant. Into this lively soluble mass he drops his own work, with the hope that it will cause a coagulation of taste and thought. . . . The number of people who understand the International-American rhetoric is definitely growing. This, as noted above, also increases the rewards for, and consequently the chances of, vulgarization, which has started to drain the meaning out of the movement.

3. The newspapers and liberal weeklies have never been serious about literature; seriousness has been confined to the reviews and "little magazines". It is easy to see why: these publications, orienting themselves on "American interests", have assumed a smug proprietorial defense of "our literature"; while all serious efforts in American letters have been directed more or less humbly towards the European-American equation. More directly, however, liberalism assumes that all questions can be solved through "moderation"—even lies and vulgarity must be treated moderately; and there is here a definite hatred and fear of ideas and acts carried through to their conclusion. Whereas literature tends, especially in modern times, towards exaggeration and finality (its moderation, too, is exaggerated), and this has been congenitally distasteful to the liberals. In addition there is outright individual dishonesty and log-rolling constantly at work in that "social-minded" atmosphere. When the liberal weeklies are moderately hospitable to experimental critics like Burke or Schapiro or to poets like Williams or Fearing, at the same time surrounding their contributions with those of all sorts of publishers' bootlickers and editors' boys, they show even less concern for values than the reactionary supplements who attack a thing merely because it is new. Thus whatever is good in *The Nation* or *The New Republic,* and there have been many good pieces and excellent writers presented there, has been forced to cling with its teeth to a slippery intellectual surface.

4. Sure, there's a place for literature as a *profession.* In fact, it's one of the few professions that has a future—along with military aviation, demagogy, patriotic preaching, spying, etc. The worse society gets the more professional literature becomes, and the greater the demand for this type of intimate service.

5. See my review elsewhere in this issue.

6. See above.

7. In time of war the writer has at least the obligation *not to find the "good side" of it.*

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Henry Miller:

1. I find the expression "a usable past" a strange one. I cannot conceive of a past that is not usable, especially for a writer—that is, one which is not alive and fecund. Born in America, and having lived there the greater part of my life, naturally this past is American. It would be queer if it were Chinese or Senegalese, no? The figures who make up the elements of my past are practically unknown; they are the ordinary, every day people whom I lived and worked with. Exceptions are Emma Goldman, whom I heard lecture several times in San Diego, about twenty-five years ago, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Arturo Giovanitti, Carlo Tresca, Jim Larkin, Benjamin Fay Mills, none of whom I knew personally, but all of them had a great influence upon me. As regards the comparative influence of Henry James and Walt Whitman, I can speak only for myself. For me Henry James is nil; Whitman I believe is more alive than any American ever was and will, in my opinion, live forever. I say this because he was more than just a writer.

2. I never think of an audience when I write. In the first place I don't even know what I am going to write when I sit down to the machine. No doubt every writer has his own definite audience, which he creates as he goes along. I think this audience is intangible and undefinable. Part of the great joy of writing derives from the discovery of this unknown and unsuspected audience. As to whether the audience for serious American writing has grown or contracted in the last ten years it is difficult for me to say, since I have been abroad all that time and have not kept in touch with things American. However, unless America has been miraculously spared the fate of the rest of the world, I should be inclined to think that the proportion of intelligent, discriminating readers is constantly diminishing. Mass consumption, mass action, mass literature, mass suicide—that seems to be the world trend.

3. I place no value whatever on the criticism my work has received. Criticism is for the critics, not for the writer. Serious literary criticism has always been rare; one has only to take a glance at the opinions of the critics concerning the great writers of the past—I mean the critics who were contemporary—to see what rubbish it is, for the most part. Criticism today, though we have more of it than ever before, is practically non-existent. Like many other forms of our activity, it has become a racket.

4. No, I have not yet been able to make a living from my writing; I have to borrow and beg to keep alive, a practice I find more effective than using such crutches as teaching or editing. I believe, however, that a very successful living can be made from writing, especially in America, if only one can be reconciled to giving the public what it likes. And sometimes

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one receives his due reward even when he does not give the public what it likes. There is a direct and an indirect road to fame and fortune, as with everything. Of course there is a place in our economic system for the profession of literature. The only question is: *what kind of literature?* Our economic system, rotten as it is, provides for every form of human activity.

5. I believe that my writing is an expression of my own individuality, and I believe further that this is true for every writer, good or bad, regardless of what his allegiance may be. What a man believes and what he is are two different things, easily distinguishable to the discerning eye.

6. Having been away from the country since 1930, as I said before, I am hardly qualified to describe the political tendency of American writing; but had I been in America all this time I believe I would have been immune to it. I am thoroughly disinterested in politics, whether American, Chinese, or European. Politics is a pursuit which is suitable to those who have nothing better to do. Nor am I interested in the specifically "American" elements in our culture. ("Our" culture—I don't know what that means, to be frank. I didn't know we had a culture.) What interests me in human beings are those things which are above and beyond the question of nationalism. The *man* is the important thing, not what country or culture he represents.

7. As to my attitude towards the possible entry of America into a world war—my decision on that subject was made ever since I became of age. I refuse to go to war, whether for a just or an unjust cause. If that means being killed by the government advocating war, then I am willing to be killed. It is possible that I might murder a man in anger; that would be an individual act for which I would assume full responsibility. Governments may go to war; individuals are not obliged to, unless they so choose. I cannot say what the responsibilities of writers in general should be on this question of making war, any more than I can say what should be the responsibilities of plumbers or bricklayers. To kill or not to kill, to defend oneself or not to defend oneself, are questions which each individual has to answer for himself, and which he will, according to his character and temperament. I see no problems confronting the world which might not be solved peaceably. There will be war as long as people believe in the superiority of force, which is a delusion. I believe that the most sane and practicable solution to the present impasse would be to scrap all forms of defense and expose ourselves absolutely to every risk.

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Palm Sunday

C. R. Jackson

WE WERE IN A CELLAR looking at a boat. It was down in South Jersey where we often visit and the boat was made by one of the boys there, Ted his name was: a nice boy, modest, industrious, and very intelligent in an unassuming way. That morning his father had come over and told us about the boat, proud, but quiet about it, and asked if we didn't want to come and see it. So we all went over.

It was in the cellar of a neighbor, and there we stood now, my brother and I and our friend and Ted and his father, standing around the boat and looking at it where it caught the light from the three or four small windows up near the ceiling. The boat was new and shining with varnish and Ted and his father looked at it calmly in a very masculine way (exactly alike) as if there were nothing remarkable about the boat and they had always been used to it, while we stood about making appropriate comments. These came out naturally enough as the boat was a beauty and we were filled with genuine admiration;—at least we ourselves had never been able to make anything half so good or even thought of it. We might have been able to draw a better picture of it than Ted and his father, or describe it better, but we couldn't have begun to make the thing or even planned it out. We stood around looking at the boat and I was thinking how different Ted's adolescence was from what ours had been.

It was funny that morning. I seemed unusually receptive to associations of the past, that day, as if I had suddenly acquired a sixth or seventh sense, so perhaps what happened later was bound to happen anyway, in one way or another, even if we had not gone to see the boat or if the radio had not begun to play when it did. As we walked over to this neighbor's cellar with Ted and his father, things kept coming up in my mind that disturbed me and made me want to stop and identify them, place them where they

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belonged in the past, and link them to me and the present by whatever associations were convenient or true. Going along the tiny lake where the waves slapped against the dock I kept thinking of the big waves that pounded against the breakwater on Lake Ontario where we used to live; and then as we rounded the tennis court, soft and yellow and soon to be rolled and made ready for the summer, I thought of that other tennis court years ago where I used to watch the older fellows play on hot summer afternoons, and how once one of the men came over to me as they were changing courts and said, "For gosh sakes, I should think you'd roast in that Indian suit, on a day like this." For no reason at all, all these things that kept coming up in my mind made we want to stop and kind of savor them, but now we were at this neighbor's house and Ted and his father lifted the cellar door and we went down.

The boat was held up by some props or a cradle of some sort (I don't know what the right name of it is) and looked indeed a very fine and workmanlike job and even a professional one. We stood around and looked at it, filled with surprise and genuine admiration. It was about twelve feet long, oval of course and blunted at each end, with a rectangular depression cut out in the middle where you'd sit and handle the tiller or raise and lower the keel. This depression wasn't cut out, though; it seemed to have been built first and then the rest of the boat, or what in a larger boat would have been the deck, had been shaped around it, the fine boards curving beautifully and delicately from the stem to the stern. The whole thing, especially the smooth glistening deck, seemed to have been made of very fine wood, fitted almost like inlay work, but Ted and his father said this was only because of the varnish.

Lying along a rack on the side wall was the mast. It was about eighteen feet long, strong-looking and perfectly shaped. It was varnished bright like the boat (in fact everything was varnished a bit too much for my taste but Ted and his father said this was for protection against the water), and, like the boat, it had been made entirely by Ted. He had gone into the woods and picked out the cedar himself, cut it down and lugged it home, and now it was this beautiful mast shining in the rack along the side wall like a long golden icicle, as foreign to the woods from which it came as it was to this damp sunless cellar. My brother and I and our friend could

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only say that it was swell, and we meant it, but our praise sounded flat and meaningless in the presence of the finished product that spoke so finally for itself.

This was what Ted had hurried home to from school all winter long. While other boys went skating or trapping, or played pinochle in the backroom at the gas station, Ted worked here in the dim cellar. And on Saturday when other kids hitch-hiked into the city to go to the movies or played hockey on the lake, fooled with their sending- and receiving-sets or monkeyed with their fathers' cars, Ted was here, all day at work, emerging from the cellar only for meals—quiet then, uncommunicative about what he had been doing. . . .

How much different was this work and his absorption in it from the things that similarly occupied me when I was his age. I too hurried home from school, directly school was over, but for different reasons. I wrote stories, composed verses, drew pictures, lived in fancy entirely, and then had little to show for my industry. All one spring I was engrossed in the making of a colorful romance called "The Story of Strongheart, An Indian Brave," but actual work on it consisted mostly in imagining new and thrilling episodes which I seldom put down, talking about it endlessly to anyone who would listen (chiefly my mother), then going again to my notebook, turning to a fresh page, and printing the fascinating title once more in fancy letters: "THE STORY OF STRONGHEART, AN INDIAN BRAVE"—and under it my name, with the careful note: "Aged Eleven (11)." Then, a couple of years later, there was a long poem called "Phaedre," a formal thing with many antique terms: trireme, charnel house, agora, obolus, pharos, architrave, peristyle, petasus—words I collected as other boys collected stamps or those tiny silk-fringed carpets that used to come with cigarettes; but who Phaedre was, whether male or female, mortal or god, no one ever knew and I have forgotten. . . . One more thing: an allegory entitled "Printemps, Été, Automne, et Hiver"—an elaborate picture worked in colored crayons on cardboard that came in the laundered shirts of the father of a friend of mine, who saved these cardboards for me as there was no father in our house. The words that composed the title of my picture I had copied painstakingly out of a French dictionary, taking especial delight in marking the strange accents, and innocently avoiding the article, as one does in

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English. Why my allegory should have been titled in French I do not know, but it seemed better that way.

These, then, are the things which occupied me, not only, like Ted, after school, but all day long too in the class-room: a never-ending daydream that made me deficient in my studies, a stranger to my classmates, a nuisance to my mother, and forever restless and dissatisfied with myself.

"Tell them about the sail, Snitch," said Ted's father.

"They don't want to hear about it."

"Of course we want to hear about it," I said.

"Snitch fooled me *that* time, didn't you Snitch. He certainly put me in *my* place, all right. Tell them about it, Snitch."

"There isn't anything to tell."

"Oh yes there is. You just don't want to show up your old man, do you Snitch. I know you." Ted's father laughed. "Anyway, he said he could carry forty yards of sailcloth—"

"Thirty-six," said Ted.

"Well, thirty-six, and I told him he was crazy. So who was right? So Snitch was. As usual. If you don't tell them about it, Snitch, I will. I'm not ashamed."

We stood around listening to Ted's father kidding him and then gradually I became aware of music playing somewhere, an organ, and it seemed several minutes before I realized that it was a radio in the house upstairs. Nobody was paying any attention to it but I was, because I now heard the chorus or choir and they were singing "The Palms," a song we used to sing in church on Palm Sunday years ago when I was a child, and then with a sudden unaccountable misgiving I remembered that today was Palm Sunday. It is actually true that my heart beat just a little faster for several minutes when I first heard that music; but when I remembered why, and reminded myself that I had long since overcome my feeling about Palm Sunday and that song, I was all right again and able to go on listening to the conversation here about me in the cellar.

"Of course you'd have to see the sail to appreciate the story," Ted's father was saying. "It's a dandy, all right, but thirty-six yards —why, he'd never be able to carry it in the wide world, his mother and I told him. And then of course when it came to a show-down, Snitch made us out a couple of ignoramuses like he always does,

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didn't you Snitch."— So the conversation went on, I listened and did not listen, heard and did not hear the music upstairs, *Waving green palms the throng moves on its way*, a phrase of music that once had the power to sicken and excite me but now only caused me to glance involuntarily at my brother, to discover that he too had received, unconsciously at first perhaps, a similar association.

My brother was looking at Ted's father, obvious interest showing in his face; and then after a few moments, as he became aware of the music, I saw that he was not looking directly at him but a little above him, just above his head, and his expression was thoughtful, reminiscent, absent; and so he remained for some time, not so much listening as thinking, tracking down in his mind some dim recollection of his own. At length he turned toward me, and his faint smile of understanding was verification that for a moment we had shared some remote and secret connection of ideas. For him the music meant church and childhood, and for me it did also, but back of the music, the particular music of "The Palms," was a realer connection—something that I could only now, for the first time in my life, willingly explore.

"Snitch wanted to buy this sailcloth and I gave him the money and he was going to go into the city on the bus and buy it himself. Then his mother came to me and said what was I thinking of, to let a little boy like him—that's what *she* called you, Snitch, not me—go into the city and carry home thirty-six yards of cloth all by himself. And being sailcloth, his mother and I naturally thought it would be some kind of material like canvas, and thirty-six yards would certainly make a bolt bigger than Snitch was himself. He insisted it wouldn't and his mother pleaded with me not to let him go till I got fed up with the whole business. 'All right,' I said to his mother, 'let him go in and find out for himself, the dumb cluck. Then maybe he'll listen to reason and let me get the cloth for him the next time I go to the city with the car.' "— Through all his feigned exasperation you could see that Ted's father was really pleased with Ted's insistence and stubbornness and was enjoying the story, but I was listening with only half an ear, as it were, thinking all the while of that person whom the music upstairs had recalled so vividly to my mind, a man, I felt sure, unlike any Ted would ever know. . . .

There was a man in our town—(I suppose every town has

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such a man)—who made a terrible impression on me when I was about Ted's age, and on a good many other boys of my generation, I later learned. Most of us, I guess, passed through his hands at one time or another, briefly or for a longer period, depending on the temperament of the boy, though none of us knew about the others at the time and never spoke of it or acknowledged it later when we did know. He was a singer and a musician, a man of real talent, who was active in all the musical and church affairs of the town and very much in demand where a good singer was needed or a man who knew music and could play the piano or organ. Everybody admired his talents and liked him personally too, and when he sang, men and women alike were genuinely enraptured with his voice and considered our town lucky to have such a man for our very own. My mother used to say that he had as good a voice as Lambert Murphy or John MacCormack and could have gone just as far, if only he'd had any gumption, and maybe she was right. But what is true is that life in our community, both public and private, would have been very different if Ray Verne had not been there.

His name was Raoul de la Vergne and it really was his name, but he was always spoken of and even thought of as Ray Verne. Only in the paper and on programs of commencement exercises and church doings was the fancier name used, like

"La Donna E Mobile . . Raoul De La Vergne"

and then people would say (but never with surprise, for it was always expected), "Look, Ray Verne's in it," or "Ray Verne's singing tonight." His importance in the town was such that he worked for both the Episcopal and Methodist churches (he played the organ in our church and directed the choir for the Methodists) and nobody thought anything of it. He was prominent in the Masons, too, and led all their musical activities. He sang at funerals and weddings; was popular with the Italians on the other side of the canal, with whom he used to congregate on Saturday nights and drink wine and sing; and of course he had a good part in every home-talent show that came along, and, if it was a musical show, he played the lead. When our high school put on "Pinafore," Mr. Verne sang the role of Ralph Rackstraw inevitably, though he was old enough to be our father. But that didn't matter: he sang beautifully and he didn't look old. Though he must have been forty at

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the time, he never looked it. Indeed, it is a curious fact about Mr. Verne that he never seemed to grow a day older. From my earliest childhood until the time I last saw him about five years ago, he changed very little. He grew a little fatter, maybe, but not really older: still handsome, still possessed of an amiable and youthful personality, and always the master of that incredible voice. But what struck me most, on that visit home, was that his reputation in the town was just as secure on the one hand, and just as notorious on the other, as it had always been. It taught me something about the small-town mind.

"Well, Ted went into the city on Saturday a couple of weeks ago—on the bus, as he intended from the beginning—and bought his precious sailcloth. His mother was in a stew all day long and called me—she called me an *inhuman monster,* no less, for letting a little boy of fourteen undertake such a thing. She said he never could carry thirty-six yards of sailcloth all by himself any more than I could, and that I was a brute to even let him try.—See what I have to put up with for your sake, Snitch?"

When I was fourteen I sang in our church choir, and my brother too. He was twelve then and we had been in the choir since we were small boys, with Ray Verne as the organist and director of the singing. And this one year, because I had a pretty good voice, Mr. Verne picked me out of the rest of the boys to sing a solo on Palm Sunday, during the Offertory. The hymn was "The Palms," which was sung every year in our church by somebody or other, and this year it fell to me. It was a nice hymn, all about Christ's entry into Jerusalem the Sunday before he was crucified, and everybody throwing down palms in his path; and the music, I had always thought, was very beautiful. It was simple, easy to learn, and well within my voice range, but Mr. Verne thought I needed a lot of private rehearsing. So afternoons after school I'd go to the church and meet him and he'd play the music for me over and over and I'd sing. We were up in the chancel alone, there was nobody else in the church, and once as I finished he put his arms around me and hugged me. I was sitting on the bench beside him, and though I thought he hugged me only because I had sung well and he was pleased, I got up and stood at the end of the bench. "No, stand here where you can see the music," he said, "and we'll try again;" and he pulled me in between the bench and the organ,

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facing the music rack. He began playing the music with one hand, and put his left arm around my stomach and held me close to him, his fingers just inside my belt. I remember I couldn't sing for a moment, and all at once he stopped playing, turned me around toward him, and started to undo the buckle.

"So along about the middle of the afternoon, Snitch steps off the bus right in front of the house with a package under his arm no bigger than the Sunday paper, and without so much as a by-your-leave or a 'Nuts-to-you-Father,' disappears into the cellar. Was my face pink.—After a decent interval, during which I took time to compose myself, I came over here to the cellar and found Snitch with his sailcloth all spread out on the floor like a circus tent at midnight, and there was, so help me, thirty-six yards of it."

That was two days before Palm Sunday. I suppose I should say that after it was over I suffered all the tortures of the damned, but I don't think you do at fourteen and I didn't, at least not then. I was too scared and excited to do anything about it and anyway it was all over in a minute. My chief reaction was confusion and a consequent resentment, but not against Mr. Verne. It was directed chiefly against myself, was very intense for a little while, and then was easily forgotten. I left the church a few moments later, very anxious to be alone, and at once dismissed it from my mind. When I thought about it later, that night alone in my bed, my resentment and confusion were gone, and my imagination was held by exciting but vague pictures of the future, in which, curiously enough, Ray Verne did not figure.

The next day, Saturday, Mr. Verne was to hear me sing for one last rehearsal, but this time it was to be in the Methodist Church where he was working that day. I arrived shortly after noon and let myself in at one of the big front doors. I had never been in that church before and it seemed to me, as I walked slowly down it, the vastest space I had ever seen indoors. Mr. Verne was up at the organ, improvising, I believe you call it; and when he saw me, he stopped at once, turned on the bench, and said, "How'd you like to go up into the steeple?"

I said I would, and I would. The Methodist steeple had always been a thing of awe to me, and still was, at fourteen. I had a paper route before school mornings that took me by the Methodist church every day, and almost every morning I'd have to stand there a

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moment or two, directly in front of the church, on the lawn, or even close up to the steps, and stare straight up into the sky along the length of the steeple. I had to do this, I say, because of the thrilling sensation of dizziness it gave me. My neck hurt and my head swam, maybe I even tottered a step or two, but high overhead the steeple pierced the blue sky; and if it was a day with clouds, the spire rushed forward along them, bending further and further, leaning and leaning, until it seemed certain the whole far-reaching structure would topple down upon me and crash across the town. That was how the steeple was from below. I knew it well that way. But to know it from above—to be up there and look out and down —my heart rose at the thought, and I was a little scared, too.

"Shamefaced as I was, I apologized—didn't I, Snitch?—But he, like a good son, pretended not to know what I was talking about and then went on to explain that for sailcloth he was supposed to get Egyptian cotton but found he didn't have enough money. So he bought thirty-six yards of feather-proof ticking instead. Smart, wasn't he? *How* he knew about feather-proof ticking, nobody knows, but when I told his mother she said of course, that's just what she would have gotten. So you see? Snitch and his mother are the smart ones of the family. Me, I didn't even know that ticking was feather-proofed!—Or is it 'proven'? You're a scholar." My brother smiled, but I could see he wasn't really paying attention, hearing instead that music coming down into the cellar from the room above us, the sickish music of "The Palms."

Going up the last stairway my heart was pounding. The stair was very narrow and looked unfinished, with walls sloping in on us so that we kept having to lean sideways to go ahead. Mr. Verne went on up in front of me. I could see his kind of fat womanish bottom as he bent over to duck the rafters that jutted out from the sloping wall toward the center-post around which we were slowly climbing. The air was dry and dusty and it was quite dark most of the way, but at each turn you could see it was lighter up ahead. I was honestly interested in seeing the steeple and the town from there but I pretended to be even more so. My heart pounded and I kept swallowing. I think I knew what was going to happen but at the same time I didn't dare think of it either or I would have run away. Then we came up into the light onto a small platform about

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eight feet square and Mr. Verne said this was it, this was as far as we could go.

I stood up and sure enough the sloping circular walls met all together just a few feet over our heads. There were some old ropes lying in a corner and a pile of old papers, and near the floor were four small round windows, looking out to four different directions. I knew those windows well, though I had always thought they were openings to a dove-cote, and here they were as big as our bathroom window at home. I leaned down and looked out, and stayed there a long time looking. This was when I pretended the most, because I was too scared to think of myself or of where I was and why. Sticking up over the trees, looking much nearer than it was to walk it, I could see the school-house and the school-house clock. And all around, sprinkled with more trees than you would have believed, spread the town—but not far, not far at all; for only a block or two away, it seemed, the houses stopped and country began: farms and hills and long fields. I got my nose right to the glass and looked down at the post-office across the street from the church, and a car drove up in front and a man got out and ran up the steps, and it was Mr. Brock. I could tell it was, because of the yellow corduroy jacket that he always wore on week-days, and I was surprised that I could see it was Mr. Brock from here. I don't know what Mr. Verne was doing all this time and I don't think he said anything, till finally he said, "Come here a minute. Stand over here." Then what I was scared would happen happened; but right in the middle of everything, when my fear had turned into something else just as frightening, Mr. Verne stopped what he was doing and I heard him say: "Gosh you're good." He gave a low laugh and looked up at me and said: "You're almost as good as your brother."

Only a couple of times in my life have I been sick and that was one of them, but it was not a sickness of the body or anything organic, it was the sickness of rage and shock and a dozen other things which to this day I have never been able to account for or explain, because I have not experienced such a feeling since. On my way down the steps out of the steeple I knew, or thought I knew, it was the last time I would ever be inside the Methodist Episcopal Church. But it wasn't. I had to go there again, once, years later, and again it was to see Mr. Verne, whom I was old enough by that time to call "Ray," but wouldn't.

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I sang "The Palms" the next morning in our own church, all right, but I didn't do it very well. I hated that song. All I wanted to do was go far away by myself somewhere, outdoors, but I sat there in the choir-pew up in the chancel, with the wonderful yellowish-green light coming in through the stained-glass windows and making everything look as if it were under water; and I kept trying hard to think how much nicer the Episcopal Church was, which it was, and then Mr. Verne nodded to me from behind the music-rack and I got up. It was during the Offertory and everybody was sitting back, looking up at the chancel, waiting for the solo. I didn't dare look at anybody but I knew I was trembling, because my brother had whispered to me just before I got up: "Don't be scared—you know you'll be all right." And afterwards, everybody said I was all right, and the minister gave me two palm-crosses to wear instead of one because he said I deserved it, and Mr. Verne asked mother if she wasn't proud of me.

This morning, standing in that sunless cellar with my brother and our friend and Ted and his father, and hearing "The Palms" being played in the house above us, I knew that at last this music was powerless to disturb me, and I knew why, and why it never would again. There was something to be said for going over these things, dragging them up, as it were, and looking at them. Too long, without reason, I had hated that song, bitterly, actively, even after I had forgotten its association with Mr. Verne, church, the room in the Methodist steeple, and my brother. Now I could look upon the music for what it was: a simple anthem-like melody in stately measures, easy to sing, pleasant to listen to, not unpleasant, now, to remember. But my aversion to "The Palms" was so strong when I was fourteen that I left the church and choir the following winter, a good two or three months before Palm Sunday was to roll around again, and I never took part in our choir activities further. I won this victory only after a long quarrel with my mother, in which I argued that I was too old to sing in the choir anymore; that I was old enough to have my own ideas on religion and go to church when and where I pleased; and chiefly that I hated the wine that I was forced to drink at Communion whether I liked it or not—and how could it possibly mean the body and blood of Christ anyway, this wine that was made by some wops somewhere like any other wine and this little sliver of a wafer that was no different

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from the fish-food we bought at the five-and-ten for our goldfish at home? Very radically I argued all this, and my bewildered mother, saddened and hurt, gave in.

A year or so later I discovered music—specifically, the voice of Caruso on my mother's Red Seal records that she kept in a special mahogany cabinet in the parlor and not all in a heap under the Sonora the way my brother and I kept our own records, like "A Hunt In The Black Forest" and "Cohen On The Telephone" and "In A Clock Store" and all our yodeling and whistling and Hawaiian records. I had found Caruso; and passionately, hours together, I sat enthralled before the voice that issued from between the slats of the sound box. And one day I went over to the house of a neighbor lady to hear her records, as my mother had told me that she owned a lot more Caruso records than we did. The lady very kindly gave me the freedom of her parlor and phonograph and left me to amuse myself for the afternoon. Almost the first record I selected was one called "Les Rameaux." It sounded promising because unknown. I put it on, released the catch, and set the needle in the groove—prepared in advance, in my idolatrous way, to be shaken into new and irrational raptures. What I heard affected me deeply, but I did not interrupt the hated song. On the contrary, I allowed it to go on to the end, listening to the strange language of the familiar tune; and before it was finished I achieved an acceptance of the thing that was like a release. The song I had known existed no longer. Henceforth I would call it, as it was here called, "Les Rameaux." If I must go on having "The Palms" turn up in my life every so often, as it was bound to do, I would defeat it by recalling Caruso and thinking of it in the French.

"When we launch this thing, I'm going to get out a bottle of my best Chateau What-have-you, vintage 1066 and all that, and Ted's mother is going to smash it over the prow with her own hands and say, 'I christen thee "Snitch the First!" '—Look at him, fellows. The old sourpuss, he thinks I'm making fun of him." My brother laughed. Then, in the pause, he glanced at me, and again his smile was one of recognition, telling me plainer than any words that he remembered the time I sang the solo in our church choir, the song we heard coming down to us from above. I was touched by his remembering, not the less so because I expected him to and

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he did; but for me there remained one or two more things to remember, things that he didn't know of.

I was in the bathroom one morning, lying in a full tub, soaking, enjoying the luxury of a long, warm, Sunday morning bath. The bathroom door was open, as it always was in our house, and I could hear mother moving about downstairs. Then the telephone rang. I heard mother leave the kitchen and walk into the living-room to answer it. I stopped swishing the washrag around and listened. I heard mother say, "Oh, hello, Ray," and then, "No, he isn't here." Then there was a pause, and I heard her say, "What do you want him for, Ray?" My heart beat so I could count it. Then after another pause I heard mother say, "No, he won't be home all day, but I'll tell him you called," and then, "All right, Ray, goodbye." I sat up in the tub, listening hard, my mouth open, my heart sounding against my ribs. Then I heard mother leave the living-room, come out into the hall, and start up the stairs. I got up on my knees in the tub, leaned over, and shut the bathroom door very quietly. Then I sat back and began to whistle, not too loudly, and busied myself with water and soap. I heard mother's footsteps coming down the hall, and then a rap on the door. I stopped my sloshing around and said, "Yes?" . . . Mother said, "What's Ray Verne calling you up for?" . . . I said, "What do you mean? Who?" . . . Mother said, "Ray Verne just called you up. What does he want you for?"—accenting the "you"—and again, "Why should he be calling you up?" . . . I said, "Why, *I* don't know! How should *I* know?" . . . Then she said, "Why should Ray Verne be calling? Do you know anything about it?" . . . I said, "For heaven's sake, mother, I don't know what you're talking about! What did he *say* he wanted? *You* answered the 'phone!"—Mother was silent a moment and then said, "He said he wanted you to go riding with him this afternoon." . . . "Well, then he wanted me to go *riding* with him this afternoon," I said huffily. . . . Mother was quiet for a minute and then she said, "Listen. I don't want Ray Verne calling you. Do you understand?" . . . I said, "My gosh, what are you talking about! I don't know what you're talking about!" . . . "Yes you do," mother said, "you know very well what I'm talking about. And I don't want Ray Verne calling you again, do you hear?"—Before I could say anything more, mother was

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gone. I heard her go back down the hall and then downstairs, and that was the last word ever said about it between us.

As I grew older, I heard Mr. Verne spoken of several times by others in a way that made me uncomfortable, and I began to realize that maybe my experience with him had not been unique. People in general, however, avoided the gossip about him, and his standing as a singer and artist in our community was as strong as ever. He had taken to wearing *pince-nez* with a long black ribbon, which everyone thought made him look very distinguished, and he sang as often as before at church benefits, at affairs of the Masonic Temple and other lodges, and in every home-talent show during the winter. At Commencement, the night I graduated, he sat on the same platform with us, as he was to sing "None But The Lonely Heart," and did, to the usual great applause. Yet everybody in the town knew about him, including other women besides my mother, as I was to find out to my embarrassment.

During my last year in high school I had a job on Saturday nights taking tickets at the movie house, the only night of the week when the theatre ran two shows. It was on this night, too, when they always had a couple of vaudeville acts between shows, put on by some vaudeville people who came down Saturdays from the city. I loved the job, because I enjoyed seeing the movies and the acrobats, as well as all the farmer people who came to town Saturday nights; and also of course I had free passes, and my girl Marion, the girl I went with all through high school, always came and sat in the last row where we could talk once in awhile, and then waited for me till after the last show was over.—One night just after the first show went on, the theatre manager came to me, very excited, and said the vaudeville people hadn't arrived, for some reason, and would I go and get Ray Verne to come down and fill in with a song or two in case the vaudeville act didn't turn up before intermission. I said I would and he said Mr. Verne was probably at choir practice in the Methodist Church and I went up there. The church was mostly dark, but the tall windows down near where I knew the organ was were lighted up, so I went in at the side door and came into the church. As I came in the people stopped singing and looked down at me. Nobody said anything. They looked funny standing there in their everyday clothes, with hymn books in their hands, the women with their different hats on,

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some of the men in overcoats or with scarfs around their necks. Mr. Verne heard the singing stop and turned around on the bench. I was standing below, in the half dark, and my voice sounded funny and embarrassed as I spoke. I said, "Mr. Verne, may I speak to you a minute"—and he left the organ and came down the steps to me, away from the others. Everybody looked at me in silence as though they didn't know me or had never seen me before, though I knew them, all right, and they knew me, and one of them, even, was my girl's mother. Well, I said what I had to say, quietly, so as not to interrupt the choir rehearsal too much, and Mr. Verne said yes, he'd come down to the theatre as soon as he was finished. I said thanks and started to leave, and then Mr. Verne, on his way up to the choir again, called back, "I'll be there in half an hour," and then I kind of nodded to the others but none of them nodded or spoke at all, not even Marion's mother. And though I knew they didn't hear the reason for my errand, it never dawned on me what they were thinking till, a few nights later, when Marion and I were walking around the band-stand, Marion said she had something funny to tell me. I said what, and then she said that her mother told her she didn't want Marion to go around with me anymore if I was a friend of, or had anything to do with, Ray Verne.

"Okay, Snitch, I guess we're all properly impressed—aren't we, fellows? Let's go out now and get some fresh air." Overhead, as we turned away from Ted's shining boat, the song had ended, that simple melody that I would no longer need to think of as "Les Rameaux"; and as we emerged from the cellar into the bright sunlight of midmorning, I was a little surprised, at first, that the day looked no different from when we had left it. We stood on the damp soft earth and said our goodbyes and see-you-laters to Ted and his father, and promised of course to be present at the big "launching" of "Snitch the First" next weekend. Then my brother and I and our friend walked back along the lake toward our friend's house and dinner.

We passed the tennis court and started down the lake path single-file, our friend first and then my brother and I, ducking now and again to avoid being swiped by the occasional low-hanging branches of the willows. And then my brother turned and said, while our friend walked on ahead, "You were thinking of the time you sang the solo in church, weren't you?" He was smiling, and I

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said, "Yes, I was."—"I knew you were," he said; and I said, "I knew you were too."

The waves spilled against the tiny beach, washing up bits of green and frothy scum, and the lake bottom, where it was not too deep, was mahogany-colored from the roots of the cedar trees. Above the sound of the wind and the lapping waves, you could hear the constant hum of the Sunday traffic on the state road, a quarter of a mile away.

"Say!" My brother turned again. "Do you remember that old old lady that lived up on the corner of Hill Street? My God, she was old when we were little kids!"

"Yes—the one that was supposed to have the first waffle-iron in town?"

"That's the one! Mrs. Williams worked for her as a companion, for awhile."

"I remember," I said. "Why?"

"Well," my brother went on, "did you ever know that when she died, a couple of years ago, she left all her money to Ray Verne? Can you beat it?"

"Well, can you beat that!" I said.

"About forty thousand, they say—Harry Jenkins told me when I saw him in New York last year," my brother said. "Mrs. Williams was so mad that she ripped up all the bed linen in the house."

I laughed. "Fat lot of good that did her.—But can you beat that about Ray Verne! What's he doing with it?"

"Oh, I don't know. Probably drinking himself to death with the Italians across the canal. He can't be much of a singer anymore. Anyway, it was enough to take care of him for the rest of his life.—I suppose the old lady had always loved his voice."

"Probably," I said.

Again the waves of the little lake made me think of that other lake in the past—our Ontario—and how the big waves there rumbled upon the beach and blew spray at us as we raced along the shore, shouting to each other in order to be heard above the surf, a kind of joyful panic spurring us on, faster and faster, down the hard white sand to where the pier to the lighthouse began. And having reached the lighthouse pier, we'd rest there, hanging on the iron bars of the railing, catching our breath and wiping the tears

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from our eyes—to stare out over the rolling windy lake which we knew to be as vast and awful as the ocean.

My brother stopped and tossed a stone into the water. "Isn't it funny how far away all that seems," he said,—"how unimportant."

"Yes," I said. I felt good, and I knew my brother did too, and I was hungry and had a good appetite. The day was warm and lovely now and we could have stayed out longer, but I was anxious to get back to our friend's house, where I knew the dinner that awaited us would be a good one.

A LETTER TO HITLER

Last winter we were
short of firewood and

it was good and cold
so we used a lot of

old books that were
in the attic just old

novels nobody would
ever want to read but

we found they made
plenty of heat and

twice they set the
chimney afire when

a burning page went
up with the draft and

we found they would
smolder a long time

after you thought the
fire was all out and

then suddenly burst
into flame & another

thing they made ashes
that wouldn't stay in

the grate but floated
out all over the room!

James Laughlin

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The Americanism of Van Wyck Brooks

F. W. Dupee

NEW ENGLAND has given to the United States its most literate body of native tradition, and educated Americans, regardless of their particular backgrounds, are always tending to become spiritual New Englanders. If the Yankee tradition is no longer very much alive, so much the worse for educated Americans. Of this type of native mind Van Wyck Brooks is an excellent example. It is true that years ago, as the spokesman of a city culture which was then just emerging in its strength, Brooks made a great effort to master the spiritual New Englander in himself. He did not quite carry it off; his Yankee alter ego has since taken entire possession of him. And it is now clear that he has always owed to the older tradition a great many of his qualities—the restraint and conscience that have marked all his work; the taste for arduous scholarship; the rather elaborate prose which is the conscious register of his highly-organized individuality; but above all the air of unworldliness, of consecration, which comes perhaps from his allegiance to the New England principle of intensive cultivation. "The great thing is to be saturated with something." Henry James, another spiritual New Englander, used to maintain. And Brooks has saturated himself with the problems of art and society in the United States. But it was another tendency of the rhapsodic Yankee strain to turn everybody—novelists, philosophers, critics, historians, naturalists—into poets; and Brooks, too, admirable though he is as a scholar and social critic, has always at bottom worked and thought in the manner commonly ascribed to poets. Like them he tends to see all experience in the light of a single overmastering situation, but in his case the great situation, the *donnée*, is associated with the vicissitudes of creative inspiration in the United

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States, with the difficulty of realizing oneself, not only as an artist in America, but as an American artist. The effort to reconcile art and society in terms of our national experience has accordingly dominated all his work, both the early and the late, and has given an otherwise episodic career an urgent inner consistency.

2.

By working very hard a single important piece of territory a writer may earn, at the very least, the reputation of being a "phenomenon". This has been the case with Brooks, yet it has always been hard to say just what kind of phenomenon he is. During the years when estheticism was the prevailing literary creed, he used to be called, rather invidiously, a sociologist. But as sociology came to seem to us less alien and less of a mystery, it was decided that Brooks' social insights were the by-products of a temperament primarily ethical. And people pointed to his *Freeman* essays, which showed that when hard-pressed by disappointments, as he appears to have been during the post-war years, he was capable of taking up a position of reproachful righteousness barely distinguishable from that of the New Humanists, whom he had always assailed. Let us see to what extent these various distinctions were justified. Morality, it is true, is the socialism of the individualist, who seeks to extend to society at large the codes that have come to govern people in their individual relationships. And Brooks has been as consistently an individualist as he has been consistently preoccupied with the larger questions of society. But in deriving his ethical ideas from the new psychology of the Unconscious, he broke in part with the philosophy of traditional moral individualists. Like them he continued to conceive society in terms of an analogy with the structure of the human personality, but instead of picturing personality as a complex of higher and lower selves, as a Plato or an Arnold—moralists even in their psychology —normally pictured it, Brooks saw in it the Freudian pattern of repression and sublimation. And this pattern, modified as much by vestiges in him of the old ethical severity as by elements of modern materialism, he extended to social experience; so that the United States often appeared to him as a case of "atrophied personality", a "prodigious welter of unconscious life" which it was the task of

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the new intelligentsia to bring to consciousness. If Brooks was a sociologist he was first of all an individualist, and if he was something of a moralist he was primarily a psychologist.

In America where the middle class, filling the whole picture, had made life as precarious for specialized types of individuality as it had made it safe for the more standard varieties, it was natural that a critic like Brooks should seize upon the new psychology, apply its insights to American writers of the past, and preach its ethic of self-fulfillment to the writers of the present. His criticism had therefore its intimate connection with his time and place, and that connection we shall presently consider in detail. But let us first look at Brooks' work in its more technical aspects. His generation was making a great point of the importance of being "creative", a slogan which Brooks translated into his own medium, developing a criticism that had many of the qualities of imaginative literature. In form it was eloquent, concentrated, boldly thematic; and it carried the biographical method to a higher point of development than it had yet reached in American criticism. In a sense Brooks' approach is merely a variant of methods employed by Sainte-Beuve and Taine, but it acquired a special character through the intensity both of his individualism and of his preoccupation with psychology. The questions of culture at large he approaches in terms of leading individuals; the work of single writers he considers in the light of their biography. Thus *The Ordeal of Mark Twain, The Pilgrimage of Henry James* and *The Life of Emerson* are all attempts to characterize entire cultural periods through the experience of leading individuals; and even *The Flowering of New England,* as someone has said, is not so much a history as a composite biography. The biographical method is commonly used to cast light on the work of literature. With Brooks, however, this procedure is usually reversed. When he appeals to the work it is in order to confirm some theory about the man; the real object of his criticism is something which might be described as a psycho-literary superpersonality; and at this he arrives by dissolving literature into biography in such a way that the concrete literary product, the work itself with its four walls and established furniture as given by its author, is often lost to view. And this is true concerning his treatment of the intellectual as well as the structural properties of literature. For all his vital interest in the New England tradi-

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tion, he has never made it very clear just what transcendentalism, considered as a philosophy, really was. And surely it is a paradox of his career that he should have been so warm in his championship of the artist, yet so cold to the work of art, so ready to proclaim America's intellectual poverty, yet in practice so indifferent to ideas.

There have been many instances, of course, where Brooks' critical methods involved no particular difficulties. The literary portraits in "Our Poets" were certainly not lacking in a vivid esthetic concreteness, nor were they demonstrably inconsistent with the actual work of the authors concerned. But other books, notably the "Pilgrimage" and the "Ordeal", have given rise to criticism on the grounds that the accomplishment of James and Mark Twain was ignored or distorted. Let us consider these charges, taking up first *The Pilgrimage of Henry James.* This book, which seems to me somewhat better than its reputation, testifies to Brooks' ability to say things of value and to raise important issues even when in his main argument he appears most mistaken. For on the whole the picture of James that emerged from the "Pilgrimage" seemed to be a deduction rather from Brooks' general theory of literary nationalism than from the novels themselves, the latter having a complex irony which Brooks failed to take into account and which in the end seriously undermines his thesis. Yet it is curious that in this case Brooks *did* examine the novels, and one concludes, not that his method is necessarily faulty in itself, but that he possesses in any case a strongly metaphysical cast of mind. To the sober scholar in him there is yoked a visionary and the two have some trouble pulling together in harmony. A myth-maker on one side of his nature, he sometimes strikes us as being himself that very poet-prophet, that reincarnated Whitman, which he once had the habit of invoking; but on the other side he is a sceptic, a critic and an historian. Of the conflict generated in him by this ambivalence there is further evidence in *The Ordeal of Mark Twain.* The general thesis here appears to me considerably sounder than that of the "Pilgrimage"; and in addition to having been a pioneer in the attempt to fuse the historical and Freudian perspectives, the "Ordeal" was a splendid example of closely-textured argument, analytical wit and the restrained use of local color; and it would be hard indeed to forget its picture of Mark Twain, "that

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shorn Samson, led about by a little child, who in the profound somnolence of her spirit, was simply going through the motions of an inherited domestic piety." Nevertheless the "Ordeal" has presented many difficulties to its readers. It is one thing to muckrake a period, as Brooks here so effectively muckrakes the genteel era, pointing out its stultifying effects on a writer of genius; but it is another thing again to assume that in happier conditions your writer would have been a Tolstoy. For that is more or less what Brooks does assume, and the result is that the historical Mark Twain is everywhere dogged by the shadow of an ideal or potential or Unconscious Mark Twain, a kind of spectral elder brother whose brooding presence is an eternal reproof to the mere author of *Huckleberry Finn.* In addition to being highly speculative, Brooks' approach has the disadvantage of diverting him from what Mark Twain achieved in a positive sense through the cultivation, however fragmentary, of his plebeian sensibility. This achievement it was left to Ernest Hemingway and other practicing artists to discover for themselves.

3.

But Brooks' habit of using the materials of history and biography to construct didactic myths, literary lessons in the shape of parables, was probably the effect of the period in which he came to maturity and of what he was trying to accomplish in that period. Throughout the years of industrial revolution following the Civil War, writers in America had been consigned, some of them to a limbo of servility, others to virtual oblivion, depending on whether they accepted or embraced the prevailing standards of that iron age. However, when Brooks' first volume appeared, in 1909, the old exploitative phalanx of American society had been for some years breaking up. There was a great increase of radical consciousness on the part of the masses, and intellectuals had taken advantage of the general ferment to assert once more the claims of the individual. And thus, for the first time since the Fifties, there came into existence a body of professionals sufficiently independent, militant and cohesive to be called an intelligentsia. This body had in a sense been the creation of the radical movement; it therefore applied itself to politics, as well, and evolved a special type in the shape of the muckraker. But this was only the first phase in the

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life of the new intelligentsia. Later on, in Brooks' generation, a reaction set in against reformism, which had so plainly missed its mark, and writers turned from politics to literature. The "artist" thereupon supplanted the muckraker as the standard intellectual type; consciousness of self was cultivated in place of class consciousness; and writers set out to express and assert and fulfill themselves. Thus the old subjective ethos of romanticism, freshly implemented by modern psychology, was reborn in America some sixty years after the decline of Emersonianism.

Perhaps nothing was more remarkable in Brooks than the flair for assimilation and synthesis which permitted him to bring to focus in his criticism all the chief tendencies of those decades. For most people at that time, politics and literature seemed to constitute a dichotomy, because, for one thing, the radical movement was even more deficient in literary culture than it is today, and for another the intellectuals lacked any unified theory of culture and society. For Brooks, too, in the long run, art and politics were to seem two separate universes; but his early criticism embodied a notable attempt to bring the two into a better relation and so to combine the ideals of the muckrakers with those of his own primarily esthetic generation. The actual political content of his criticism was vague and shifting; yet whenever he attempted a definite formulation it became clear that he regarded socialism as a pre-condition of the "creative life" in America. And in many respects his early writings provided the United States with its closest parallel to the social-democratic literatures then flourishing in Europe.

Nevertheless Brooks was at heart a psychologist and he was to keep the morality of self-fulfillment squarely in the center of his work. Nor did his socialist convictions in the long run prevent him from conceiving art as a process essentially self-contained, commanding an area of experience to all purposes special and separate. He seems to have taken over from Carlyle and Ruskin the "organic" view of society while rejecting the faith in authoritarian institutions that usually goes with it; and the mysticism inherent in this view conflicted all along the line with the scientific perspectives of socialism, forcing upon him a kind of unsystematic dualism. Concerning the relation of politics to literature, then, he tended to conceive the first as a function of a material world, the second as

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an enterprise connected with a world of the spirit. But Brooks did not exploit the music of antinomies to the extent that it has been exploited by a Thomas Mann, and in practice his dualism merely meant that in his opinion intellectuals ought properly to keep clear of politics. They had, Brooks assured them, a special mission, which was to "articulate the whole life of the people" by supplying the United States with new myths and new values; and to this he advised them to apply themselves with the fervor of a consecrated minority, a priesthood, as he said, or a hierarchy. In America as elsewhere it was an age that made much of seers and cosmic vocations. Writers were looking for prophets—particularly among themselves. And every nation, every social group, considered itself to have a "special mission". And if, in respect to his essential philosophy, Brooks was very similar to Ruskin and Arnold, he was a Ruskin or an Arnold brought up to date: the *culture* which they had advocated as social medecine, he endeavored to implement in terms of an *organized intelligentsia.* For it was an age, too, of heightened crisis and organized struggle in the field of social relations.

It is true, as Marxists have maintained, that Brooks' idea of specialization had the effect of isolating intellectuals from the masses and of retarding the development among them of a materialist view of the politico-literary relationship. But in his preoccupation with the intelligentsia there was at the same time a value which ought not to be overlooked. More than anyone else, unless it was Randolph Bourne, he grasped the importance to America of the emergence of such a body. He understood what it could mean to the labor movement, and he knew, too, that the absence of such a phenomenon had for half a century inflicted great hardship on American artists, leaving them solitary and exposed in the arena of a hostile society. It was on the new intelligentsia, then, that Brooks set his hopes for the country's future, to them that he addressed his case histories in literary frustration, his essays in diagnosis and prescription, in short the whole of that prodigious anatomy of the creative life which took shape in his early writings. And it is not without significance that when, eventually, he ceased to enlighten, admonish and inspire the intellectuals, he lost at the same time a good share of his intellectual vitality.

In view of his socialist professions it is curious that Brooks

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came to concentrate so exclusively on conditions in a single country. He appears to have felt that in Europe the evils of capitalism had been somewhat mitigated by the social-democratic movement, a movement whose success he was inclined to attribute to the efforts of literary critics. The United States, on the other hand, was a full-blown capitalist nation which possessed only the weak beginnings of a critical culture; and we must develop such a culture if we were ever to experience a genuine social transformation. It was on some such reasoning as this that Brooks tended to justify his exclusive concern with the United States, his tendency to idealize Europe, his habit of ascribing to literary culture the decisive role in reformist politics.

Proceeding always by the rule of opposites, he thought of the United States as the antithesis of Europe in respect to the quality, the unity and the social use-value of its culture. French culture, he pretended, had at the touch of Montaigne fallen together like a single organism; but America had lacked a master-spirit, and here there had always existed, between literature and experience, theory and practice, a profound cleavage which had affected for the worse both our intellectual and our daily life, condemning the first to impotent idealism and the second to stark materialism. From the beginning the Highbrow and Lowbrow had divided the country's literature between them; an effective middle tradition had failed to make its appearance; and in default of the spiritual checks which such a tradition might have exercised, Big Business had got firmly into the saddle and the Acquisitive Life had prevailed over the Creative Life. And with the optimism of a latter-day Whitman—the optimism of a generation pioneering in social esthetics (they used indeed to declare that social reform constituted the new American "frontier") as their fathers had pioneered in industry—Brooks foresaw a culture which should replace the obsolete hegemony of New England and represent the country in all its racial, class and sectional complexity.

4.

It is true that on the programmatic side Brooks' early writings were infected with the extravagance that is commonly generated by the "organic" conception of society. French critics, we have rea-

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son to believe, would be the first to disclaim any super-unity in the culture supposedly begotten by Montaigne. As for America: its intractable minorities and far-flung regions have offered to the literary nationalist a problem so stubborn that it refuses to be solved short of a social reconstruction more profound than any envisaged by Brooks. But on the critical side his work, attracting to it all the severity of a mind divided between poles of scepticism and faith, was of a trenchancy and cleverness unprecedented in American writing. Our literature did actually suffer, as he maintained, from a split personality which expressed itself in various idealistic chivalries on the one hand, and on the other in a plebeian vigor unlighted by consciousness. And surely, considering the provocation, Brooks was justified in preaching a bold scepticism. "It is of no use," he told the patriots of his day, "to go off in a corner with American literature . . . in a sulky, private sort of way, taking it for granted that if we give up world values we are entitled to our own little domestic rights and wrongs, criticism being out of place by the fireside." Not that Brooks was the only cosmopolitan critic of American letters; but where the New Humanists, for example, took as their standard of comparison the achievements of some remote Periclean or Racinian age, Brooks had the realism to fix upon the European literature of his time. Moreover, in his account of the Genteel Tradition as "the culture of an age of pioneering, the reflex of the spirit of material enterprise", as in a whole range of similar insights, he went far towards situating the country's cultural problems in a concrete atmosphere of social and economic forces. In the long run, however, the value of his early work seems mainly to lie in the skill and courage with which he isolated the data of intellectual maturity in America. In his hands the Highbrow-Lowbrow antithesis served rather as a descriptive than as an analytical tool. And what he really produced was a kind of symptomology sprinkled with clues and half-clues, with partial explanations, with portents adduced as causes and causes in the guise of portents. The materialist in him was always coming into conflict with the "organic" visionary, the social historian with the psychologist. Accustomed to conceiving matter and spirit in the shape of an antithesis, he never attained a stable view of cultural phenomena; and his lack of clarity on this point caused his criticism to veer back and forth between extremes of free will

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and determinism, so that while it seemed to him at times that the single writer might change the world unaided, at other times it appeared that we were very much at history's mercy. Furthermore, psychology came to dominate his thought to the extent that he ended by giving the impression that he wanted to fasten upon American writers a cultural inferiority complex; and it was probably this impression rather than simply the severity of his critiques per se that helped to bring him into partial eclipse in later years. And he was finally to pay in the unprofitable coin of centrism and compromise the price of his synthetic ambitions. His work would presently appear to belong neither to the sphere of literary criticism nor to the sphere of realistic social analysis. When he had finished trying to reconcile politics and literature, mysticism and science, he was left with an ideology as diffuse as that of an Emerson or a Whitman; and he seemed, like them, to belong to some more primitive stage of American society, the intellectual disorder of whose prophets signified a lack of urgent pressures in the age itself. Even Gide and Mann, accomplished dialecticians and great writers, have not really achieved universality in our time: they have merely undergone a series of significant conversions. And Brooks, endeavoring to embrace the Whole, ended by losing touch with its parts; his sensibility acquired a certain abstractness; and in time he was to seem almost the type of that Liberal critic whom T. S. Eliot from one angle, and Mencken from another, were to assail with so much effectiveness.

5.

The fate of Brooks' ideas was to receive a kind of summing-up, concentrated and dramatic, in the brief career of the *Seven Arts* review. Appearing in the Fall of 1916, *The Seven Arts* had Brooks as its chief spokesman, his theme being the necessity of a national literature for an America made acutely conscious of its individuality by the war in Europe. But a year later, America having entered the war, *The Seven Arts* showed a growing distaste for the struggle and was obliged to cease publication. Meanwhile, however, Randolph Bourne had all but supplanted Brooks as spokesman, and Bourne's theme was, more and more, the social revolution. What had happened to push *The Seven Arts,* in a single year, from literary nationalism to literary revolutionism? Had we come

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of age in a world already too far advanced in decay? Had the United States, in attaining to the level of the great powers, likewise fallen heir to a condition of crisis common to the entire capitalist world? This was more or less what had happened, as we can see in retrospect. Nationalism, having simply turned into a sordid imperialism, could no longer inspire a literature. Nor could the idea of the organic society survive the violent manifestations of a period of general revolution. *The Seven Arts,* in its rapid transition, was a fair register of the fact that ideas could appear viable at one moment, only to be swept the next into obsolescence.

The war had witnessed America's maturing as a world power: would we by the same token "catch up" with the elder nations in a cultural sense? To Brooks, at least, it began very shortly to appear that we would not. In America as elsewhere literature's response to war and crisis was both violent and immediate. And the centrifugal tendencies which it developed were the reverse of what Brooks had preached and anticipated. Writers who, like Bourne and Reed, shared his social idealism, were steered by its logic towards socialist theory and politics. There remained the literary majority which, in the main hostile to all politics, was split between two groups. First there was the expatriate generation who, in addressing themselves to their aristocratic cult of poetry and form, pretty much ignored America. And second, there were the "Titans" who were presently to found the *Mercury* and who stayed in this country, as Mencken boldly confessed, solely in order to make merry at the spectacle of its foolishness. In the United States itself the aftermath of the war witnessed the definitive triumph of Bohemia over the universities and other centers of genteel culture. Instead of merging with the Highbrow to produce a middle tradition, the Lowbrow staged a coup d'etat. Debunking replaced the respectable profession of muckraking. The common man, whom Brooks had respected as an element in his proposed national synthesis, was now to be widely scorned as a simple moron. And if Brooks had taken issue with Dreiser on the grounds that his determinism prevented his fiction from qualifying as healthy social realism, he was now to be faced with a whole generation of Dreisers. In America, in short, there was none of the philosophical scepticism which Brooks had advocated but only the "fashionable pessimism" (as he said) of parvenu plebeians, the virulent laugh-

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ter of irresponsible satirists. And among the exiles there was an atmosphere of "fashionable pedantry", reactionary metaphysics, symbolist mystification—and Brooks had never cared much for symbolism. The age of prophets and special missions had largely passed. The present age demanded of its artists and critics above all a concrete literary consciousness. And Brooks was in no position either to sympathize with its aims or to fulfill its demands. The papers he wrote for the *Freeman* in the early Twenties, and in a less direct way the biographies of Mark Twain and Henry James, were an index to his opinion of the times. As for the opinion that came generally to be held of him: it was not long before people began to complain that "for all his apparent enthusiasm for the artist, he does not seem vitally interested in art when it appears." He fails to criticize, they said, he merely exhorts. And "the development of young artists is not achieved through exhortation." These strictures were made by Paul Rosenfeld in the mid-Twenties. They reveal the strongly experimental cast of the decade on which Brooks, with his theoretical temper, had had the misfortune to fall.

6.

In *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* he remarked that to the author of *The Ambassadors* Europe had remained "a fairy-tale to the end". This was scarcely just to James but it showed the high value which Brooks himself, in 1925, still placed on the critical spirit. But the years that followed were to witness his rapid retreat from this position.

In 1920 he had published *The Ordeal of Mark Twain,* which was followed some years later by the "Pilgrimage", and then after a long interval by *The Life of Emerson.* These books, which, together with the *Freeman* papers, constitute a transition between the earlier and later work, show Brooks in the process of trying to thrash his way out of the isolation in which he has landed. Someone has compared the three biographies to the phases of the Hegelian dialectic, Mark Twain figuring as the "thesis", Henry James as the "antithesis" and Emerson as the "synthesis". But note that this is a dialectic that opens out towards the past. Brooks is intent not only upon making studies in literary frustration, nor only upon furnishing the Twenties with didactic parables (there is reason to

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think that the "Ordeal", with its stress upon Mark Twain's immature and unreasoned pessimism, was aimed at the Menckenites, as the "Pilgrimage", elaborating on the expatriate sensibility, is directed at Eliot's generation), but he is also intent upon discovering the ideal American writer. And he finds him at last in the man of old Concord, the "barbaric sage" as W. C. Brownell had called him. And from the rediscovery of Emerson there follows a transfiguration of Emerson's entire society. Brooks has found the key to American literature; he begins to write a cultural history in several volumes, the first of which turns out to be a chronicle, charming as literature, largely fabulous as history, of the creative life in New England. The present has failed us, it is evil; doesn't the past, then, by the law of contraries become good? The modern world has proven to be sadly incoherent; let us seek the organic virtues in the little pre-metropolitan half-agrarian universe of Concord and Boston. It was a Springtime culture and Spring is always virtuous. And if anyone feels disposed to remind us of "world values", let us reply that "we are entitled to our own little domestic rights and wrongs, criticism being out of place by the fireside".

Prefigured in the closing chapters of the "Pilgrimage" (it was Brooks much more than James who longed to take passage for America), his nostalgia begins to affect his style and the very structure of his work. The pointed, argumentative and analytical manner gives way to a prose of anecdote and local color, a blur of sensuous matter, a dreamlike pastiche of remembered quotations. And one feels that Brooks has affixed to his camera a soft-focus filter.

A comparison of the early and later work reveals, then, an astonishing reversal of opinion in respect to the achievement of New England. "An age of rude, vague, boisterous, dyspeptic causes" was the way he had formerly characterized that time. Its puritanism he had described as "a noble chivalry to which provinciality was almost a condition". Its Ripleys and Danas and Alcotts had seemed "a queer miasmatical group of lunar phenomena". Longfellow had been "an expurgated German student", whom it was silly to approach critically. And Hawthorne for all his charm had felt life "rather as a phantom than as a man".* But already in

*These quotations are mostly taken from *America's Coming of Age* (1915).

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The Life of Emerson Hawthorne has become "a reminder as it were of some vast Cimmerian universe . . . a real Sphinx, with a subterranean self buried fathoms deep in the desert sand". What has happened is that Hawthorne has altered not so much in kind as in scale; he has been blown up to enormous stature in order that he may play the Prince of Darkness to Emerson's Son of Light in a kind of veiled cosmological allegory that runs all through the "Life". And if Hawthorne, once a little less than a man, is capable of becoming something only short of a god, we can imagine how it will be with Emerson. As New England's chief intelligence Emerson had always figured to Brooks as the personification of a tradition shot through with false sublimities and seriously deficient in experience of life. And for Emerson, consequently, were reserved the most brilliant pages in *America's Coming of Age*. "A strange fine ventriloquism . . . a continual falsetto . . . abstract at the wrong times and concrete at the wrong times . . . he could write page after page about a poet or painter without one intelligibly apt utterance . . . he was not interested in human life; he cared nothing for emotion, possessing so little himself . . . all the qualities of the typical baccalaureate sermon." And so on. But compare this portrait with the estimate of Emerson's virtues implied (for, as in the case of Hawthorne, it is only implied) in the "Life" and *The Flowering of New England*. Here the author of *Representative Men* has become a veritable embodiment of the creative spirit, a Yankee Balder. His prose evokes images of mountain streams, his passage through the New England world is accompanied by the springing up of greenery and flowers.

A few reservations are necessary, however, if we are to see Brooks' two periods in a proper light. Needless to say he was never a debunker, even in his most militant phase, and the severity of his judgments on the New England school was plentifully sweetened with qualification. Indeed he was the writer of his generation who strove hardest to play the mediator between past and present. And if he stressed the shortcomings of the Yankee tradition it was because that tradition seemed at best a sectional phenomenon and because it had come to block the growth of a larger intellectual consciousness in America. Nor would we be justified in overlooking the very considerable merits of Brooks' latest work. The "Life" may seem a rather flimsy and Stracheyan performance, but surely

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the "Flowering" has notable qualities considered as a literary exercise and a piece of scholarly investigation. The opening chapters, dealing with the birth of the artistic spirit in a young nation, and the closing pages, describing Lowell and Holmes as characters of the Yankee twilight, cause the book to be enclosed in a frame of excellent criticism. But in the absence of any such criticism in the case of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and the rest, the frame only serves to set off a certain sponginess in the picture itself. Here, then, is a New England crowded with creative spirits but virtually bare of masterpieces, for Brooks has given up almost entirely the practice of correlating biography with literature. And here, above all, is a New England purged of conflict and contradiction, presented as an idyll of single-hearted effort; for Brooks has likewise given up the habit of correlating literary enterprise with social history. His perspective as a man of the twentieth century, his values as a socialist and an historian, both have gone by the board in the interests of an impressionistic *immediacy;* and we are invited to survey the New England renaissance through the eyes of some actual participant, some breathless Lyceum ticket-holder of the period.

Accordingly the "Flowering" represents not so much an explicit revision of Brooks' earlier judgments as a shift to a sphere where critical judgment operates only by implication. The Yankee culture has been lifted from the plane of "world values", where it shows as very small and incomplete, into an historical void where it becomes as great as you please. Indeed it is symptomatic of Brooks' present tendency that he nowhere tries to come to terms with his earlier work or to offer a reasonable explanation of the apparent disjunction between his two periods. The most he has done along these lines has been to remark, in the preface to a reissue of three early essays, that the judgments of his first period were the indiscretions of a youth bent on following an iconoclastic fashion. A fashion! So much then for the ardors, the sincerities, the hopes that went into *America's Coming of Age.* In dispensing with a rational view of American history it seems that he has lost the desire to make sense of his own history.

And it is difficult to guess what course he will follow in the forthcoming installments of his chronicle. The "Flowering" was founded on a sharp distinction between past and present, and in the

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epilogue he endeavored to furnish his anti-modernism with a theoretical framework by appealing to Spengler's systematization of the celebrated antimony between "culture" and "civilization". But Brooks' latest utterances suggest that a further shift has occurred and that in his mind the antithesis between New England and the megalopolis may have been replaced in importance by an antithesis between America, conceived as a politico-cultural totality, and fascist Europe. He has recently published the transcript of an address delivered to the Connecticut chapter of the League of American Writers. "We are Americans," he assures the Connecticut writers, "and Americans are born free." We have a national tradition and it is intrinsically democratic, and as for collectivism: of course Americans are collectivists! Franklin and J. Q. Adams were collectivists. Our revolution was fought in the name of collectivism. And isn't the League of American Writers a collectivity? Needless to say, by the time Brooks has finished playing on the word it has shed all historical meaning. "We are prepared to show that this country can do something better than fascism or communism," he boasts, and he concludes: "It is something to win the proletariat, but the writers of this state have got to win the swells, who are the farmers. . . . In order to win them, you have got to learn their language, for theirs is the sacred language of this country, as difficult for outsiders to learn as Hebrew or Sanscrit."

The "Flowering", orderly and elevated in its temper, has not prepared us for the incoherence of these remarks, the bellicose resonance of the allusions to "*this* country", the snobbish mystification involved in the appeals to a secret Yankee language. Translated into current politics, the nostalgia of the "Flowering" turns out to resemble the speeches at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon —a combination of gala rhetoric and inscrutable reasoning.

There is an element of the comedy of mistaken identity in Brooks' rapprochment with rural Connecticut (one had supposed that region to be monopolized by Polish farmers and contributors to *The New Republic*); and even more in his collaboration with a latter day brand of democratic-communism which, although he underwrites its democratic professions and rejects its communist ones, is in fact neither democratic nor communist. But in other respects the later phases of this career are matter for serious regret. The writer who began by calling into question the prevailing

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American standards, today ends by affirming them. The powerful critic of the United States has turned into a zealous curator of its antiquities. And in order finally to accomplish his great purpose of reconciling the artist with American society he has had recourse to an already distant past, and a past, moreover, which is largely the projection of his own fancy. Thus in the end the United States has become to Van Wyck Brooks the fairy-tale it never was to Henry James: for whatever may have been the attitude of James to Europe, it is certain that he had no illusions about middle class America.

In his own career, as formerly in his writings, Brooks has illustrated the difficulty of maintaining a strict intellectual position in the welter of American life. And his development has reproduced the circular pattern of the entire modern movement in American letters. Yet his is not strictly speaking a case of literary frustration nor can it be explained in purely national terms. It is a case rather of the liberal writer who, in order to avoid meeting on their own grounds the virulent problems of the epoch, has felt it necessary to revert, as he used to say of others, "to ancestral attitudes", to permit the spiritual New Englander in him to absorb the modern critic, the visionary to consume the sceptic.

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London Letter

To say what is happening in England at the present time is no easy task. In every sphere we seem to have come to an interval between Acts. The opaque and unruffled surface of public affairs suggests indeed that nothing is happening at all. We are all anti-fascist. We are all devoted to peace and convinced of our superior solicitude for its preservation. We have noticed regretfully that other nations are less idealistic than ourselves. We are determined that Right shall triumph over Might, and we are leaving no stone unturned in our effort to ensure that Right shall have as much Might as heavy taxation can provide. In short, we are still English.

But in spite of our one-way enthusiasm—or perhaps because of it—the air is peculiarly enervating. Politically we are in a kind of doldrums. Chamberlain has moved far enough leftwards to rob the Socialists of their slogans, while the Tory Right has completed the circle by appearing on the far left of the Socialists. In this happy joining of hands there is rarely a dissident voice. We are agreed that Herr Hitler menaces impartially the British Empire, the Labour Movement and the ideals of the League of Nations, and we can all find one reason out of the three for opposing him. A single illustration will show what I mean. A few years ago it was Duff Cooper and Winston Churchill who were most often attacked as the arch-enemies of radical Bloomsbury; yet recently *Time & Tide* was campaigning for their inclusion in the Cabinet, because they are considered to be strongly anti-Hitler.

The position, then, is that our politics are dominated by foreign affairs, and that on that subject we are unanimous in our protestations. It is a sign of the times that Mr. 'Bunny' Austin is too busy with his moral rearmament campaign to be able to play in the Davis Cup matches. Moral rearmament, in one form or another, is our chief preoccupation. England did not want to fight last September. We agreed that the German treatment of Czecho-Slovakia was unspeakable, but we did not want to fight about it. We probably didn't want to fight about anything at all. I think it would be true to say that men of thirty and under—the post-war youth of England—had grown up in the belief that ultimately war was something that could be left out of account. I don't mean that there had been any widespread consumption of the simpler utopias. It went deeper than that, an unconscious assumption that war was one of the human bogeys that would never quite invade actuality. That is how I would account for the peculiar shock of September. Some of us perhaps were not caught unawares, but more were than cared to admit it. The passing of Czecho-Slovakia carried with it the whole ethos of intellectual optimism—the progressive Wellsian conspiracy, the dawning May Day, the revolution painlessly directed from Bloomsbury armchairs. All that experimental theorising presupposed that

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the British Empire would lie in supine glory on the operating-table while the delectable surgery was performed by Fabian thinkers and planners and Audenesque healers. The thought that the Empire might arrive by ambulance after a nasty smash-up in Europe had not occurred. It had been discussed, no doubt, but it had not been imaginatively comprehended and articulated within the whole context of possibility. The English situation will not be understood until account is taken of the private dreams that have been dissipated by events.

John Bull's views, incidentally, are being collected by an organization known as Mass Observation, promoted by Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge. Madge will be known to some American readers as a *New Verse* poet. Mass Observation has made extensive door-to-door canvasses which reveal a fairly considerable bewilderment in John Bull's mind. Details are being published in volume-form and they are worth reading as a useful (although occasionally tendentious) attempt at self-anthropology. The canvasses cover many things besides politics, but they are worth studying for the political material alone.

I have tried to sketch our psychological climate as it is. The immediate future will probably show little change. I take it as certain that the present Government will win the coming election, since we do not gamble on the Labour party in times of international danger. But as I have said, party differences are now more formal than real. In spite of presumed differences of motive, there is identity of immediate policy. How close that identity is has been shown by the Conscription issue. A few years ago Conscription would have divided the country more bitterly than almost anything else. Even this year Mr. Chamberlain was compelled to pledge himself against it. But we were teased with a willingness to fight to the last drop of French blood, and M. Bonnet came over to repeat the gibe. Accompanied by M. Lebrun he drove through the London streets and waved encouragingly to us. It was the first procession I had seen in years, and I was struck by the whole nineteenth century air of it—the sleek landaus, the bouncing backsides of the horses, the beaming celebrity-faces bowing graciously, the somewhat rococo decorations on august breasts, the cretinous features and awkward posture of soldiers who had looked so impressive at a decent distance. One almost expected a Nihilist assassin to step forward with a pistol. They rolled slowly past like monstrous highly coloured toys on a nursery floor, and dry papery cheers came from the crowd, a bit self-conscious with the foreign words, "Vive la France." Bonnet was smiling twice: once formally to the bystanders, and once because he had something to smile about—a sharp, foxy little face that made me wonder why I was reminded of Metternich.

One knew what Bonnet meant, in spite of the denials. Conscription came and Sir John Simon (to the great regret of all parties) did not resign. Chamberlain patched his broken pledge with an inane sophistry, and nobody objected. The Opposition, which has become more "patriotic" than any Opposition in history, did not oppose. It was at this point that England

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seemed to agree that "effective measures" took precedence over matters of principle. I am not now arguing about Conscription; I merely remark that the debate never passed beyond terms of instant expediency. Our present concern is with a posture of "defence," and to hell with the composition of what is defended. I should like to give an amusing illustration of that. Movie news-reels take some weeks to reach our rural cinemas; on the day Conscription was announced I happened to see a six-weeks-old reel praising our voluntary system and proclaiming that England had shown that democracy had no use for anything so essentially totalitarian as Conscription! Soft fruit was blown by the audience, but the quick change was accepted without serious question. We are an accommodating people. For us democracy is always dandy, and it may be defined as our own political system as we find it at this moment (including the Stop Press).

The prevailing mood, then, in sloganese is an intensified resistance to fascist aggression, for the sake of democracy. Europe of course is an armed camp of resisters and peace-defenders looking vainly for an aggressor, but we can't help that: the rightness of our cause is so obvious that there is no second opinion, and so long as the Government keeps repeating the slogan it will stay in power. To find anything happening one must go behind the scenes. Chamberlain's real danger is from within his party, and the next months will show whether the Tory Right Wing—those who oppose Hitler most militantly in terms of imperialist rivalry—can capture the Cabinet. The apparently certain thing is that Bloomsbury influence on political thought will diminish. The daring revolutionary bravado of this decade may even return to the bourgeois womb and be reborn as a Popular Front, Left in its slogans and Right in its motives. Champions of the *status quo* are naturally delighted to take over a highly moral propaganda which suits their policy. Bloomsbury is putting its left foot forward in order to march backwards, and the playing-fields of Eton are about to resume their former strategic importance.

So much for politics. I might add that I had just finished these notes when the PARTISAN REVIEW Spring issue reached me and I found in D. M.'s Editorial on American affairs a complete counterpart of what I have tried to describe. I quote this, "Just think what social progress we'll make once we've rid ourselves of those monsters in black and brown shirts three thousand miles across the Atlantic," and it needs only a geographical correction to be entirely true of England. We have exported our sins to the Axis countries. We find we can be more deeply shocked at that distance. . . .

Literature meanwhile has in some respects been "buoyant." as they say on the Stock Exchange. Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Eliot have published new books. James Hanley, Elizabeth Bowen and Graham Greene have enhanced their reputations, and they can now be reckoned—with one or two others—as the best of our novelists. *Finnegans Wake* has at last arrived to give the reviewers a head-ache, and the general run of books has been of better quality than in recent years. But probably the more immediately sensitive barometer of a culture is its periodicals, and here

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the story is different. Both *The Criterion* and *The London Mercury* have closed down, and I feel their passing is important enough for comment. Not many tears have been shed over the *Mercury:* whatever merit it may have had in its earliest years, it was already a joke at the beginning of this decade. Its editor, J. C. Squire, was a rabid anti-modernist and the eclipse of his paper was inevitable as soon as Eliot had superseded the Georgians. Thereafter it lingered merely as a commercial property, passing into other hands and becoming a random rag-bag of current reputations. The sales-goodwill and a vague belles-lettrist tradition are now amalgamated in *Life & Letters Today*, which was itself a kind of decayed *Mercury* until the present editors transformed it into a well-intentioned leftist journal, animated by a routine anti-fascism, hospitable to refugees, a little amateurish, a little dull. Something that was dead has now been buried in something else that looks rather anaemic.

The Criterion is a different matter. Its cessation was wholly unexpected, and it still had a considerable influence. In his last editorial T. S. Eliot wrote—

"Perhaps for a long way ahead, the continuity of culture may have to be maintained by a very small number of people indeed. . . . It will not be the large organs of opinion, or the old periodicals; it must be the small and obscure papers and reviews, those which hardly are read by anyone but their own contributors, that will keep critical thought alive, and encourage authors of original talent."

Feeling that changed circumstances require new energies, Eliot stated that after sixteen years he no longer had sufficient enthusiasm for the job. The European mind, which *The Criterion* existed to mirror, is fragmented. The most powerful group of younger writers have not much in common with Eliot, and there is little public support for any literary review which is not at least nominally anti-fascist. I think it would be true to say that latterly *The Criterion* commanded respect but not enthusiasm. Its main energy was drawn increasingly from Eliot himself; and the more personal it became, the more freely might its editor consider employing his time in other ways. It is of course a serious loss to be deprived of what was the only substantial and authoritative review in England, and—as with Yeats's death—there is a certain sadness in the disappearance of an intellectual landmark which had acquired a very great prestige. Eliot himself will not be lost to literary journalism, as he is on the editorial board of the *New English Weekly* and will contribute to it the equivalent of his *Criterion* Commentaries.

Available periodicals now are all in the "little review" class, "hardly read by anyone but their own contributors," financed privately and frequently at a loss, appealing to a limited and specialised audience, and best described as workshop bulletins. *New Verse* is still the most efficient and lively of the "young" journals. It is always playing the ball, as distinct from cantering hopefully in the right direction. *Poetry* is a newcomer, which claims already to have a circulation of 3000 readers.

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Directed by Tambimuttu, its critical line is an anti-highbrow, Life-ah-it-is-so-simple affair. It is a pity that there will probably not be room for three verse-periodicals. *New Verse* is the home-platform of Auden and his group; *Twentieth Century Verse* has attracted most of the post-Auden poets and has a lively style of its own; and *Poetry*, in spite of the feebleness of its critical standards, clearly has a popularising technique which will gain a larger and less sectarian audience.

Of the remaining periodicals *Purpose* is the only general quarterly, but as I am connected with it editorially I refrain from comment on its performance. That leaves *Seven* and *Wales*, both of which belong mainly to the youngest group of writers. *Seven* is still uncertain in its direction, but it inclines to flirt with surrealism in its later English phase, represented by Dylan Thomas and the Paris group headed by Henry Miller. Lawrence Durrell, appearing from under Miller's wing, published his *Black Book* in the early winter and enjoyed a pronounced critical success; one of the principal contributors to *Seven*, he must be reckoned the most considerable newcomer outside the Oxford-and-Cambridge—New Verse—Bloomsbury tradition.

Briefly, the last two years have brought considerable changes in the highbrow press. The full-scale quarterly, surveying the whole range of cultural activity, drawing its contributors and its readers from a public world of educated persons, and edited by a man of national repute, is a thing of the past; in its place we have groupist pamphleteering, more ephemeral, more informal, smaller in scale, more dependent upon coterie support, and edited by men who have scarcely reached the age of thirty. Even *New Verse* has largely completed its crusade and now lives as a useful but no longer essential platform for Auden and a magisterial bench on which Mr. Grigson can amuse himself by playing censor to not very dangerous follies. So far the youngest arrivals have made no stir, and after five or six years Dylan Thomas and George Barker still hold the "Promising" ticket in default of successors. Since Mr. Auden went to Buckingham Palace it has been difficult to maintain the illusion of pioneering excitement, and Parisian exporters of experimentalist novelties are going out of business. The revolutions of the 'twenties have been dexterously absorbed, and Bloomsbury in the bigness of its heart is writing passionate slogans for the War Office. With some important exceptions, English intellectuals are pursuing an uncritical and almost hysterical anti-fascism, allying themselves in a muddle of motives with the superficially identical anti-fascisms of hitherto hostile sections, in the belief that the germs of political injustice are bred in Germany and must be fumigated before Hitler can bring the infection into the hygienic sanctity of the English home. It is sad to reflect that Bloomsbury's bleeding heart pumps up sentiments of such high moral tone, only for Bloomsbury's headpiece to convert them into a fog of confused and muddled thought.

DESMOND HAWKINS

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Gregorio Valdes, 1879—1939

Elizabeth Bishop

THE FIRST PAINTING I saw by Gregorio Valdes was in the window of a barber-shop on Duval Street, the main street of Key West. The shop is in a block of cheap liquor stores, shoe-shine parlors and pool-rooms, all under a long wooden awning shading the sidewalk. The picture leaned against a cardboard advertisement for Eagle Whiskey, among other window decorations of red and green crepe-paper rosettes and streamers left over from Christmas and the announcement of an operetta at the Cuban school,—all covered with dust and fly-spots and littered with termites' wings.

It was a view, a real View, of a straight road diminishing to a point through green fields, and a row of straight Royal Palms on either side, so carefully painted that one could count seven trees in each row. In the middle of the road was the tiny figure of a man on a donkey, and far away on the right the white speck of a thatched Cuban cabin that seemed to have the same mysterious properties of perspective as the little dog in Rousseau's *The Cariole of M. Juniot.* The sky was blue at the top, then white, then beautiful blush pink, the pink of a hot, mosquito-filled tropical evening. As I went back and forth in front of the barber-shop on my way to the restaurant, this picture charmed me, and at last I went in and bought it for three dollars. My landlady had been trained to do "oils" at the Convent. — The house was filled with copies of *The Roman Girl at the Well, Horses in a Thunderstorm,* etc. — She was disgusted and said she would paint the same picture for me, "for fifteen cents."

The barber told me I could see more Valdes pictures in the window of a little cigar factory on Duval Street, one of the few left in Key West. There were six or seven pictures: an ugly *Last Supper* in blue and yellow, a *Guardian Angel* pushing two children along a path at the edge of a cliff, a study of flowers,—all copies, and also copies of local postcards. I liked one picture of a homestead in Cuba in the same green fields, with two of the favorite Royal Palms and a banana tree, a chair on the porch, a woman, a donkey, a big white flower, and a Pan-American airplane in the blue sky. A friend bought this one, and then I decided to call on Gregorio.

He lived at 1221 Duval Street, as it said on all his pictures, but he had a "studio" around the corner in a decayed, unrentable little house. There was a palette nailed to one of the posts of the verandah with *G.*

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Valdes, Sign Painter on it. Inside there were three rooms with holes in the floors and weeds growing up through the holes. Gregorio had covered two sections of the walls with postcards and pictures from the newspapers. One section was animals: baby animals in zoos and wild animals in Africa. The other section was mostly reproductions of Madonnas and other religious subjects from the rotogravures. In one room there was a small plaster Virgin with some half-melted yellow wax roses in a tumbler in front of her. He also had an old cot there, and a row of plants in tin cans. One of these was Sweet Basil which I was invited to smell every time I came to call.

Gregorio was very small, thin and sickly, with a childish face and tired brown eyes,—in fact he looked a little like the *Self Portrait* of El Greco. He spoke very little English but was so polite that if I took someone with me who spoke Spanish he would almost ignore the Spanish and always answer in English, anyway, which made explanations and even compliments very difficult. He had been born in Key West, but his wife was from Cuba, and Spanish was the household language, as it is in most Key West Cuban families.

I commissioned him to paint a large picture of the house I was living in. When I came to take him to see it he was dressed in new clothes: a new straw hat, a new striped shirt, buttoned up but without a necktie, his old trousers, but a pair of new black and white Cuban shoes, elaborately Gothic in design, and with such pointed toes that they must have been very uncomfortable. I gave him an enlarged photograph of the house to paint from and also asked to have more flowers put in, a monkey that lived next door, a parrot, and a certain type of palm tree, called the Traveller's Palm. There is only one of these in Key West, so Gregorio went and made a careful drawing of it to go by. He showed me the drawing later, with the measurements and colors written in along the side, and apologized because the tree really had seven branches on one side and six on the other, but in the painting he had given both sides seven to make it more symmetrical. He put in flowers in profusion, and the parrot, on the perch on the verandah, and painted the monkey, larger than life-size, climbing the trunk of the palm tree.

When he delivered this picture there was no one at home, so he left it on the verandah leaning against the wall. As I came home that evening I saw it there from a long way off down the street,—a fair sized copy of the house, in green and white, leaning against its green and white prototype. In the gray twilight they seemed to blur together and I had the feeling that if I came closer I would be able to see another miniature copy of the house leaning on the porch of the painted house, and so on,—like the Old Dutch Cleanser advertisements. A few days later when I had hung the picture I asked Gregorio to a vernissage party, and in spite of language difficulties we all had a very nice time. We drank sherry, and from time to time Gregorio would announce, "more wine".

He had never seemed very well, but this winter when I returned to

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Key West he seemed much more delicate than before. After Christmas I found him at work in his studio only once. He had several commissions for pictures and was very happy. He had changed the little palette that said *Sign Painter* for a much larger one saying *Artist Painter*. But the next time I went to see him he was at the house at Duval Street and one of his daughters told me he was "seek" and in bed. Gregorio came out as she said it, however, pulling on his trousers and apologizing for not having any new pictures to show, but he looked very ill.

His house was a real Cuban house, very bare, very clean, with a bicycle standing in the narrow front hall. The living room had a doorway draped with green chenille Christmas fringe, and six straight chairs around a little table in the middle bearing a bunch of artificial flowers. The bareness of a Cuban house, and the apparent remoteness of every object in it from every other object, gives one the same sensation as the bareness and remoteness of Gregorio's best pictures. The only decorations I remember seeing in the house were the crochet- and embroidery-work being done by one of the daughters, which was always on the table in the living room, and a few photographs,—of Gregorio when he had played the trombone in a band as a young man, a wedding party, etc., and a marriage certificate, hanging on the walls. Also in the hall there was a wonderful clock. The case was a plaster statue, painted bronze, of President Roosevelt manipulating a ship's wheel. On the face there was a picture of a barkeeper shaking cocktails, and the little tin shaker actually shook up and down with the ticking of the clock. I think this must have been won at one of the Bingo tents that are opened at Key West every winter.

Gregorio grew steadily worse during the spring. His own doctor happened to be in Cuba and he refused to have any other come to see him. His daughters said that when they begged him to have a doctor he told them that if one came he would "throw him away".

A friend and I went to see him about the first of May. It was the first time he had failed to get up to see us and we realized that he was dangerously sick. The family took us to a little room next to the kitchen, about six feet wide, where he lay on a low cot-bed. The room was only large enough to hold the bed, a wardrobe, a little stand and a slop-jar, and the rented house was in such a bad state of repair that light came up through the big holes in the floor. Gregorio, terribly emaciated, lay in bed wearing a blue shirt; his head was on a flat pillow, and just above him a little holy picture was tacked to the wall. He looked like one of those Mexican retablo paintings of miraculous cures, only in his case we were afraid no miraculous cure was possible.

That day we bought one of the few pictures he had on hand,—a still life of Key West fruits such as a cocoanut, a mango, sapodillos, a watermelon, and a sugar apple, all stiffly arranged against a blue background. In this picture the paint had cracked slightly, and examining it I discovered one eccentricity of Gregorio's painting. The blue background extended all the way to the table top and where the paint had cracked the blue

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showed through the fruit. Apparently he had felt that since the wall was back of the fruit he should paint it there, before he could go on and paint the fruit in front of it.

The next day we discovered in the Sunday *New York Times* that he had a group of fifteen paintings on exhibition at the Artist's Gallery in New York. We cut out the notice and took it to his house, but he was so sick he could only lie in bed holding out his thin arms and saying "Excuse, excuse". We were relieved, however, when the family told us that he had at last consented to have another doctor come to see him.

On the evening of the ninth of May we were extremely shocked when a Cuban friend we met on the street told us that "Gregorio died at five o'clock". We drove to the house right away. Several people were standing on the verandah in the dark, talking in low voices. One young man came up and said to us, "The old man die at five o'clock". He did not mean to be disrespectful but his English was poor and he said "old man" instead of "father".

The funeral took place the next afternoon. Only relatives and close friends attend the service of a Cuban funeral and only men go to the cemetery, so there were a great many cars drawn up in front of the house filled with the waiting men. Very quickly the coffin was carried out, covered with the pale, loose Rock Roses that the Valdes grow for sale in their back yard. Afterwards were were invited in, "to see the children".

Gregorio was so small and had such a detached manner that it was always surprising to think of him as a patriarch. He had five daughters and two sons: Jennie, Gregorio, Florencio, Anna Louisa, Carmela, Adela and Estella. Two of the daughters are married and he had three grandchildren, two boys and a girl.

I had been afraid that when I brought him the clipping from the *Times* he had been too sick to understand it, but the youngest daughter told me that he had looked at it a great deal and had kept telling them all that he was "going to get the first prize for painting in New York".

She told me several other anecdotes about her father,—how when the battleships came into Key West harbor during the war he had made a large scale model of one of them, exact in every detail, and had used it as an ice-cream cart, to peddle Cuban ices through the streets. It attracted the attention of a tourist from the north and he bought it, "for eighty dollars". She said that when the carnivals came to town he would sit up all night by the light of an oil lamp, making little pin-wheels to sell. He used to spend many nights at his studio, too, when he wanted to finish a sign or a picture, getting a little sleep on the cot there.

He had learned to paint when he and his wife were "sweethearts", she said, from an old man they call a name that sounds like "Musi",—no one knows how to spell it or remembers his real name. This old man lived in a house belonging to the Valdes, but he was too poor to pay rent and so he gave Gregorio painting lessons instead.

Gregorio had worked in the cigar factories, been a sign painter, an

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ice-cream peddler, and for a short time a photographer, in the effort to support his large family. He made several trips to Cuba and twenty years ago worked for a while in the cigar factories in Tampa, returning to Key West because his wife liked it better. While in Tampa he painted signs as well, and also the sides of delivery wagons. There are some of his signs in Key West,—a large one for the *Sociedad de Cuba* and one for a grocery store, especially, have certain of the qualities of his pictures. Just down the street from his house, opposite the *Sociedad de Cuba*, there used to be a little cafe for the workers in a near-by cigar factory, the Forget-Me-Not Cafe, *Cafe no me Olvidades*. Ten years ago or so Gregorio painted a picture of it on the wall of the cafe itself, with the blue sky, the telephone pole and wires, and the name, all very exact. Mr. Rafael Rodriguez, the former owner who showed it to us, seemed to feel rather badly because since the cigar factory and the cafe have both disappeared, the color of the doors and window frames has been changed from blue to orange, making Gregorio's picture no longer as perfect as it was.

This story is told by Mr. Edwin Denby in his article on Valdes for the Artists Gallery exhibition: "When he was a young man he lived with an uncle. One day when that uncle was at work, Valdes took down the towel rack that hung next to the washbasin and put up instead a painting of the rack with the towel on it. When the uncle came back at five, he went to the basin, bent over and washed his face hard; and still bent over he reached up for the towel. But he couldn't get hold. With the water streaming into his eyes, he squinted up at it, saw it and clawed at it, but the towel wouldn't come off the wall. 'Me laugh plenty, plenty,' Valdes said. . . ."

This classical ideal of verisimilitude did not always succeed so well, fortunately. Gregorio was not a great painter at all, and although he certainly belongs to the class of painters we call "primitive", sometimes he was not even a good "primitive". His pictures are of uneven quality. They are almost all copies of photographs or of reproductions of other pictures. Usually when he copies from such reproductions he succeeded in nothing more than the worst sort of "calendar" painting, and again when he copied, particularly from a photograph, and particularly from a photograph of something he knew and liked, such as palm trees, he managed to make just the right changes in perspective and coloring to give it a peculiar and captivating freshness, flatness, and remoteness. But Gregorio himself did not see any difference between what we think of as his good pictures and his poor pictures, and his painting a good one or a bad one seems to have been entirely a matter of luck.

There are some people whom we envy not because they are rich or handsome or successful, although they may be any or all of these, but because everything they are and do seems to be all of a piece, so that even if they wanted to they could not be or do otherwise. A particular feature of their characters may stand out as more praiseworthy in itself than others —that is almost beside the point. Ancient heroes often have to do penance for and expiate crimes they have committed all unwittingly, and in the

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same way it seems that some people receive certain "gifts" merely by remaining unwittingly in an undemocratic state of grace. It is a supposition that leaves painting like Gregorio's a partial mystery. But surely anything that is impossible for others to achieve by effort, that is dangerous to imitate, and yet, like natural virtue, must be both admired and imitated, always remains mysterious.

Anyway, who could fail to enjoy and admire those secretive palm trees in their pink skies, the Traveller's Palm, like "the fan-filamented antenna of a certain gigantic moth . . ." or the picture of the church in Cuba copied from a liquor advertisement and labelled with so literal a translation from the Spanish, "Church of St. Mary' Rosario 300 Years Constructed in Cuba."

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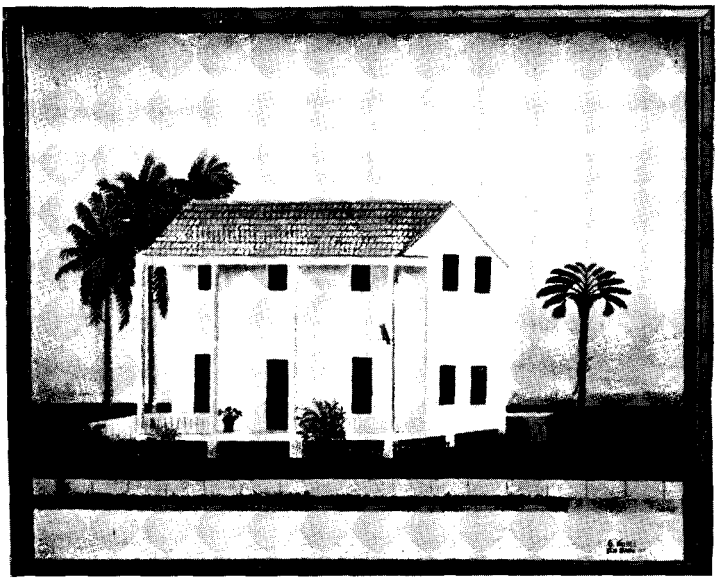

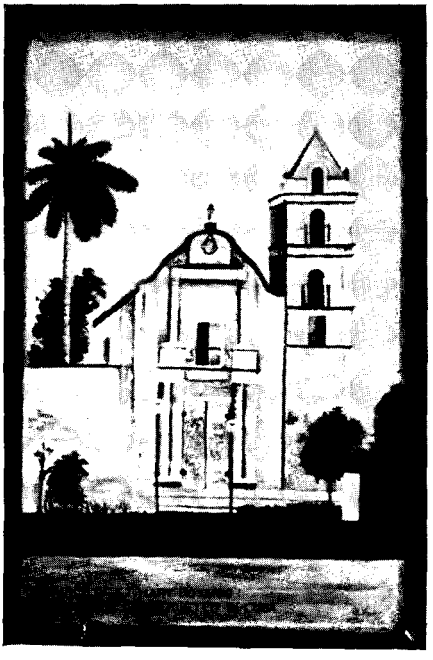

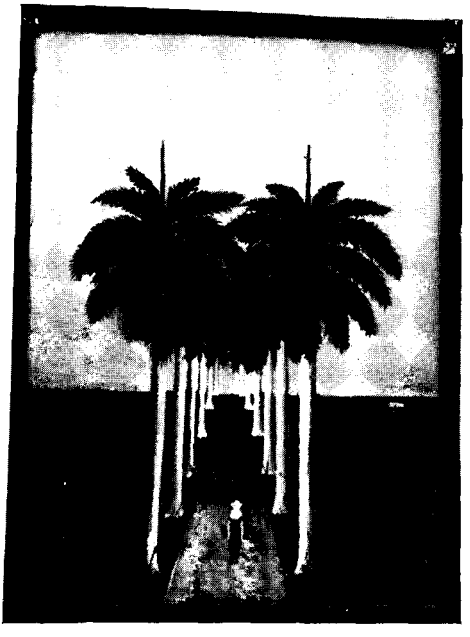

Paintings by Gregorio Valdes

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Notes on "Finnegans Wake"

William Troy

NOTHING COULD BE less profitable than any attempt to offer a definitive analysis or evaluation of the new Joyce work* at the moment. It is true that sections of it have been available for fourteen years; we have had time to become accustomed to its difficult language and technique; and there have been a number of tentative exercises in exegesis and interpretation. (The best of these are still those to be found in the symposium issued by Shakespeare and Company in Paris ten years ago and recently republished in this country.**) But the work in its entirety has been off the presses only a few weeks; it is over six hundred pages long; and it is written in an idiom that can very easily create that state of panic which the mind experiences when, to recall a phrase of Proust's, it feels itself passing beyond its own borders. This last statement is not intended to be derogatory. It means simply that the impact of the book is such as to cause an extraordinary strain on the normal equilibrium of our faculties of response. It is not altogether a joke when Joyce refers to his "*funferal*" as designed for "that ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia". And since few of us can answer to the requirement we must follow the admonition to patience offered elsewhere in the text. What we must try to avoid are the facile and premature judgments that attended the publication of *Ulysses,* realizing that in the seventeen years that have elapsed since that event no single adequate interpretation of the central symbolism of the book has been written. Interpretation must precede evaluation; and, for several reasons that will become evident, the problems of interpretation in *Finnegans Wake* are beyond those presented by any modern work. If we have enough confidence in the task on the basis of Joyce's other performances and of those sections of the present work that we have already

*_Finnegans Wake_, by James Joyce. Viking Press. $5.

**_An Exagmination of James Joyce_. By several writers. New Directions, Norfolk, Connecticut. $2. New Directions has also brought out a translation of the first "stream-of-consciousness" novel, Edouard Dujardin's _Les Lauriers Sont Coupés_, under the title _We'll to the Woods No More_.

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learned to appreciate, we will be content to proceed for some time by what Yeats somewhere calls "little sedentary stitches".

The first and most obvious of the problems is, of course, that of communication. Here the most simple-minded explanation that can be offered is that Joyce is reducing language to "pure music". It is undoubtedly true that the musical effectiveness of the style is quite overwhelming; there is nothing like it in contemporary writing. To hear portions of the work read aloud, especially if it is by Joyce in the phonographic recording that he has made, is to relax all too easily into the kind of swoon induced in untrained listeners by music. But this is a danger always inherent in really successful verse, and perhaps the first point that should be made is that if the style here is not exactly that of verse, it is something intermediate between that of verse and that of prose. It depends for its movement pretty consistently on a recognizable unit of verse-structure. This is the pattern of movement established by the three-syllable foot, dactylic or anapestic, with its possibility of almost infinite variation within the line through the substitution of other shorter feet. "Latin me that, my trinity scholard, out of eure sanscreed into oure eryan". This is a line capable of being analyzed as a quite acceptable example of the rare dactylic octometer—with a cæsura after "scholard". More often than not, Joyce begins with a regular metrical beat only to drop it suddenly for an effect of surprise: "Drop me the/ sound of the/ findhorn's/ name, Mtu or Mti, sombogger was wisness". The first two feet are perfect dactyls, the third a spondee, and then the line seems to dissolve into prose. The predominant foot throughout the work, however, is the more lilting, caressing anapest because of its closer correspondence to theme and subject. As Samuel Beckett points out in the symposium already mentioned, the work is "not *about* something; *it is that something itself*". And if the anapest is used so often, it is because it is the inevitable movement for rendering the babbling and the bubbling of the "gossipaceous" Anna Livia that is the river of Time: "with a beck, with a spring, all her rillringlets shaking, rocks drops in her tachie, tramtokens in her hair, all waived to a point and then all inuendation".

But this is still not to give justification to the charge that Joyce has reduced language to pure sound, which is to betray an unaware-

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ness of the functional interrelationship that always exists between sound and meaning in poetry. In music the individual unit of expression, the sound, is an abstraction; form and content are indistinguishable; the *meaning* of a piece of music resides in the total organization of its separate units. But in poetry, where the individual unit of expression is the word, sound is the *medium* or vehicle of meaning. Poetry, as has often been stated, is the more difficult because the more impure of the two arts. Yet this has been its principal glory: the maintenance of a proper harmony between the sound and the meaning of words, both taken separately and in their interpenetration, has constituted the art of poetry. And we may suggest that if the "pure music" fallacy crops up here again it is because of the now almost universal incapacity to make an adequate response to poetry. What is being offered to us more and more in the name of poetry is something hardly different from the matter-of-fact type of statement about a situation that used to be limited to prose. We have forgotten that the special function of poetry is not so much to describe or explain a situation as to express an ordered emotional attitude toward the situation. Music is involved in such expression because of the still unanalyzed and probably unanalyzable effect of music on our psychology—its power of rousing, sustaining, and ordering our emotional states. It is neither an accompaniment nor a decoration; it is an imponderable part of the poem, "the thing made". And this is to say that it is inextricable from the *meaning* of the poem as a whole. These are elementary considerations; but they perhaps cannot be repeated too often in an age given over so exclusively to the situation.

In the extraordinary richness and variety of musical effect in his writing, therefore, Joyce is simply pushing to a high degree of development qualities that we find in all authentic poetry. And the same can be said of his manipulation of the content-meanings of words. Here the principal point to be made is that the poet does not use words for their past history alone. This would be indistinguishable from the manner in which the mathematical scientist assigns one fixed and immutable meaning to his symbols. From the standpoint of poetry such symbols are inert, dead, and hence inoperative. Poetic symbols consist not only in all their past histories but in whatever special modification of their meanings are involved through their use in a present context. A word, in the terminology

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of modern physics, is a time-space event. It is not too much to say that for the poet no word in a language is ever used twice exactly in the same way. William Empson has written a stimulating book on the subject entitled *Seven Types of Ambiguity.* An ambiguity, according to Empson, is "any consequence of language, however slight, which adds some nuance to the direct statement of prose". Of course it is an implied joke that the possible "consequences" cannot be reduced to the mystic number seven; and I. A. Richards, in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* demonstrates even to himself the bankruptcy of the attempt to submit imaginative expression to the quantitative method. Poetry refuses to become a branch of behaviorist psychology. And Richards is finally brought to agreement with Coleridge that language is "everywhere at its goal": you cannot separate the leaves from the tree without doing violence to the whole. (Joyce uses the identical image to indicate the organic relationship between his subject and his style.) But it may be worth-while to look at an instance of this determination of the full meaning of a word by its place in the context in the poetry of the past:

> Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in my ears,
> That long time have been barren.

This is from Act II, Scene V, of *Antony and Cleopatra,* and is addressed by Cleopatra to the messenger from Antony. Everything in the scene up to this point has served to bring out the mood of febrile desperation to which Cleopatra has been reduced as a result of Antony's long absence. Yet the eighteenth-century commentator Dyce could not believe that Shakespeare would have had Cleopatra use such a word as "ram"; he proposes "rain" as a more sensible reading. Although he was quite right in believing that there should be some connection between the main verb and the image of "fruitfulness", he was too "sensible" to appreciate the Shakespearian fondness for ambiguity. For it is of course no accident that of all the possible verbs in English denoting "press" Cleopatra should have hit upon the one that is derived from the name of the animal which is the sacred symbol of fertility. As a matter of fact, it is possible to go further and relate the association to the play as a whole, in which Antony is continually being referred to as a god and Cleopatra compared to the earth-goddess

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Isis. And in this way the word "ram" would take on its full significance only in relation to the play as a whole.

Is such a use of language what we usually describe as punning? Several of Joyce's reviewers have been content to leave the matter at that. But there are obviously puns and puns; we say that some are pointless, some make sense. Undoubtedly, Joyce allows a certain number of the pointless variety to creep into his book—if for no other reason than that pointlessness is one of the inherent capacities of the human mind. What shall we say, however, of those words which, like Cleopatra's "ram", begin to make sense only when we relate them to other things in the work. For example, there is the line, "My cold cher's gone Ashley". It has probably been already pointed out that "cher" makes at least three associations in the mind: it is the name of a river at Oxford, and its sound suggests both the French word for "flesh" and the English word for a common article of furniture. Even within the limited context of the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" episode it is possible to establish some connections. For "Cher", like Ashley in the same passage, is simply one of the innumerable names of the one river that is Time; flesh is identical with earth through which Time passes as History; and "chair" may refer either to the bankside on which the washerwoman is sitting or to the earth as a whole. It would seem, then, that if this is punning it is a very special kind of punning. And for the kind of pun that accomplishes a meaningful fusion between disparate things we have the term metaphor. The important difference between the ordinary or mechanical pun and the metaphor is that where the first is content with the purely intellectual perception of the accidental formal resemblances between words the second is concerned not only with more essential resemblances but with putting these together into a new whole. The first is the work of the abstract intellect, the second of the imagination.

In classical rhetoric the device by which a part is used for the whole or the whole for a part is called synecdoche. This is the device we use in common speech when we refer to a workingman as a "hand" or to spring as the "year". Synecdoche is only one of the devices of rhetoric; metonymy is another; and the dictionary defines metonymy as that figure of speech in which "not the literal word but one associated with it is used; as, the 'sword' for war". But the distinction is a rather quibbling one, for "hands" are asso-

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ciated with men just as much as the sword with war. In fact, the more closely we study these metaphorical devices the more they break down into the single device of synecdoche. (All metaphor would seem to be an expression of the inveterate human need of coordinating experience.)

Is it possible that Joyce intends not only every word but the book itself to be an example of synecdoche? Let us look for what clues we may discover in the title. The identification of Tim Finnegan, the Irish hod-carrier, with Finn Mac Cool, the Irish hero, and the suggestion of a pluralized form of "again" may be related to the main subject—the resurrection of the hero. "Wake" is one of those words that have undergone a radical transformation into their opposites in the course of their usage. Derived from an Anglo-Saxon root meaning "to be born", it seems to have acquired by association the meanings "to be awake" and, by further association, "to be watchful". From the last of these meanings it came to be applied to the watch over the dead. The additional sense as the trail left behind by a ship is of independent origin. Now all five of these senses are capable of being related to the main structure of the work: E. C. Earwicker, in whose sleeping brain is retraced the whole wake of history, will rise up again like Finnegan at his wake and be born again. "Life, he himself said once . . . is a wake, livit or krikit, and on the bunk of our bread-winning lies the cropse of our seedfather."

But this is merely another striking instance of the use of a part for the whole. Of what whole might the book itself be considered a part? Joyce describes the work in a number of passages in the text—practically the whole of the fifth episode of Part I is devoted to this purpose—and refers to it by various names and phrases. It is a "vicociclometer", a "collideoscope", a "proteiform graph", a "Jeeremyhead sindbook", and a "polyhedron of scripture". But perhaps the most revealing of these "kennings" is "Meanderthale". For as the Greek river Meander wound its circuitous course through so many valleys (German, *Thal*) of the earth to the sea, the tale will finally have its ending (Latin, *talis*) with Earwicker's dream of Anna Livia (the stream of History) returning again into the sea of Time. Moreover, like the river whose substance is the ever changing distillation of the ever unchangeable elements its substance is the ever changing and

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unchangeable stuff of human history. It is, in brief, the verbal equivalent of the processes that are its subject and theme; the concrete realization of the identity of time and space. But since it does possess its own being, its own ontology, it may be said to stand in relation to time-space as a part to a whole—a synecdoche. Or, shall we say, it is a kind of *Logos* of the Einsteinian vision of the universe.

According to Vico, each of the three successive ages of history had its appropriate mode of communication: in the Theocratic period, it was the Hieroglyphic; in the Heroic, the Metaphorical; and in the Civilized, the Abstract. "The language of the gods was all dumb, and very little articulate; the language of heroes was composed of equal quantities of articulation and dumbshow; the language of men was all articulated, and very little in dumb-show." By the Hieroglyphic, Vico seems to mean that before primitive men could register in speech their reactions to Nature—the thundering of the Sky-god, for example—they made use of signs and gestures —an anticipation of the school of Paget in England today. And since the visual precedes the aural image, the first recorded language is the pictograph. Now one of the features of the Joycean method that we have left unmentioned is the importance of the visual aspect of the word, its "look" on the page. Although rarely if ever does a verbal effect depend on the eye to the exclusion of the ear, he does employ punctuation, space-divisions, capitals, and other visual equivalents for aural effects. Modern language, insofar as it is set down in print, is pictorial; and part of our response to the meaning of a word is our sense of its visual image. To this extent it also is hieroglyphic.

The point is worth making because Vico believed that in the period of "the barbarism of reflection" that marked the final stage in the historical cycle language returned once again to the hieroglyphic. This is not a clean-cut stage like the others but rather one of confused transition between decadence and the emergence of real barbarism. It is the moment when the rational and the prerational function side by side with mutual indifference. In this Alexandrian interlude the scholiasts, encyclopaediasts, and other Joyce includes uproarious parodies of the first (the whole second "looters" of the knowledge that has just been accumulated function side by side with the prophets of the emergent barbarism. Since

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episode of Part II) and examples of the hyperbole of the second (the sixth episode of Part I) we can conclude that the style of *Finnegans Wake* is compounded of the characteristic modes of expression of all three epochs of history.

The *form* of the work is, therefore, contained in each of its parts. "In fact, under the closed eyes of the inspectors the traits featuring the *chiaroscuro* coalesce," we are told on page 107, "their contrarieties eliminated, in one stable somebody . . ." The problem of interpretation is the detection and labelling of these traits—symbols, images, motifs—and the reordering of them according to some logic of the mind. And this is a problem that is rendered almost hopelessly difficult by the very nature of the narrative method that Joyce has adopted.

It is clear that the center of everything is the dreamer, H. C. Earwicker; but while this citizen of Dublin is an individual character, highly particularized in many respects, he is also an archetype of the race. This is to say that his dream is conducted simultaneously on the two planes of the personal and the universal; and one is by no means always able to determine the exact nature of their "coalescence". This may be illustrated by the treatment of the Fall-motif, which occupies the first episode. The Fall is rendered from every one of its possible aspects. There is first of all the fall of the earth from the original Chaos: the Humpty-Dumpty ballad harks back to the most ancient cosmological myths, like that of the Orphic conception of the universe as an egg upon the waters, whose breaking was responsible for the earth and other planets. Primitive man fell from the state of animal unconsciousness when he lifted his eyes in terror to the sky and inquired the source of the thunder-bolt: *Finnegans Wake* may be said properly to begin with the polylingual word for thunder on Page 1. Adam fell from the state of innocence and grace when he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and Phoenix Park takes on much of the vegetation of the Garden of Eden throughout the episode. Then there are the innumerable falls of heroes and men, which would include those of Agamemnon and of Finnegan from his ladder. All these are to be identified with Earwicker's own fall from virtue through some unworthy act in the Phoenix Park one spring morning. But the exact nature of his crime is made known to us only

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gradually and by the most tenuous references throughout the text. In other words, the chronological method, in which effect follows upon cause, has been abandoned for what might be called the method of *simultaneity*. And it is a consequence of this method that effects may precede causes whenever they like because all that is recorded is the order of "events" in the consciousness.

For the origin and development of this particular method we can discover three distinct influences: Vico's theory of the flux and reflux of history, Jung's conception of the collective unconscious, and Einstein's theory of relativity. Several summaries of the first have already been offered; and indeed we need hardly look outside the work itself, which abounds with passages like the following: "a good clap, a fore marriage, a bad wake, tell hell's well; such is manowife's lot of lose and win again". The mistake, as Samuel Beckett points out, is to make too "neat identifications"; for the Vician account of history serves as hardly more than the loosest sort of formal framework. It is comparable to the various occult and mythological machinery by which Yeats—in poems like "The Second Coming" and "The Magi"—sought to express a similar intuition of the recurrent patterns of human culture. Moreover, Joyce does not adhere literally to the order of Vico but, as we have seen in the case of the language, telescopes all the different epochs into one at every point in the work. Also the notions of the "collective unconscious" or "the Great Memory", by means of which the individual is supposed to carry around in him the mythical formations of the whole racial experience, might have been appropriated by Joyce equally well from Yeats, A. E., and certain others in the generation that preceded him in Ireland. There is, it is true, in the latter part of the work, a close application of the Jungian description of the manner in which the individual is freed from the repressions of the social self through reidentification with the symbols of myth and religion. Nothing leads us to suppose, however, that Joyce shares Jung's view that these patterns have an hereditary physical foundation. As for the contribution of modern physics, everything in the book—language, form and theme—may be related to the Einsteinian concept of the time-space event. We tour in a "no placelike, no timelike absolent". And the work is full of such passages as this: "some saying by their Orlog it was

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Sygstryggs to nine, more holding with the Ryan vogt it was Dane to pfife".

After the account of the Fall just mentioned, nothing less than the whole terrain of human history lies before us. Part I is a treatment of man in his first stage of heroic fatherhood; Earwicker has heard the thunder-clap—the voice of authority that is here sometimes identified with the police—and settles down to the relatively more stable life of the hearth. He has fallen from the state of grace as a result of the infamous charges that have been made against him. These are hinted at in the blasphemous "Ballad of Persse O'Reilly". It is clear that Earwicker is one with all the heroes who have ever walked the earth; the different epithets by which he has been known are listed on pages 71-72. Because with the sense of sin men ceased to copulate in the open fields but hid their shame in the caves that were the first homes, the All-Father of the race must submit to marriage. Not until this event can we say that history begins; for the woman-principle is also the time-principle. Man, the idea of Man, is no more than an eternal abstraction, which would be condemned to sterility if it did not become united with time, which is history.

In the hilarious fifth episode there is much description of a book which is at once the book that we are reading, since Earwicker is actually writing it in his sleep, and also the book of the earth—a "claybook". It would seem, however, that the author of this book is not Earwicker but one Shem the Penman, who is vilified at length in a later episode and whose career bears remarkable points of resemblance to that of Joyce himself. This is a conundrum that begins to approach solution only when we apply some of the Cabalist-Gnostic symbolism which Joyce probably acquired from Blake and which figures so largely in *Ulysses*. For here Earwicker would seem to represent Adam-Caedmon, the original and perfect man, from whose dismembered body have come the multiple phenomena of the earth. Shem is that principle of reason which is responsible for the separation of the Many from the One. If he is reviled by the Father, it is because he has preferred the consciousness of existence to existence itself, knowledge to life. He is guilty of the primal impiety. Like his Biblical prototype, who was punished for looking on his father's nakedness, he is branded as a "Pariah, cannibal Cain". Because of this betrayal and irreverence,

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the great mother—"the turfbrown mummy"—is surging down on both of them to take them in her embrace. Because of this destruction of his original unity the First Man must take on all the innumerable forms that history will impose on him, and the episode closes with the dancing footsteps and the trilling voice of Anna Livia—the mother of heroes and men.

With the famous Anna Livia Plurabelle episode, we come to the end of what in Vico is the Theocratic period, when men were engaged in making their gods out of their readings of the universe. All the symbols here are of the elemental forces. The two washerwomen on either bank of the Liffey represent organic and inorganic nature, life and death, wrangling between them over the flux of human history that rolls indifferently on toward its goal. At the end the one will be turned into an elm and the other into a stone. The Hill of Howth, overlooking Dublin bay, stands as the symbol of male permanence. As in Proust's "Overture", the episode includes nearly all the themes and motifs that will be elaborated in the succeeding parts; the river holds in precipitation, so to speak, all the figures and events that will rise to its surface with the passage of the generations.

Beyond this point there will be no effort in these notes to proceed. It is reasonable to suppose that the next two parts will bear some kind of significant correspondence to the Vician cycle. Part II opens with descriptions of the Ice Age and the Flood, which suggests that we are picking up the thread at a moment when mankind has so doomed itself that it has to start all over again. It concludes with the first full statement of the Tristan-Isolde theme, which is to be so prominent in the third part. The progression would seem to be from boisterous heroic action through feudal romance to the combination of abstract and psychotic preoccupation with sex of the modern civilized period. It is evident that Earwicker is reliving his own youth through identification with his children, who become transformed into all the most cherished archetypes of strength and beauty that rise up out of the racial tradition. We will probably have to keep in mind Jung's description of the manner in which by this process we seek to work out for ourselves in sleep a new equilibrium for our waking life. But just to the extent that the hero's actual experience rises to the surface and becomes involved in the fantasy the language seems to become

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more blurred and evasive. One cannot always distinguish between the sleeper and the figures of his dream; Earwicker melts into Shaun and Shaun into Earwicker; their voices become confused in the dusk of language.

This is illustrated in the last passage of all—the beautiful swan-song with which the work ends. The final section is in the form of a *coda,* which reassembles all the themes that have been developed, in a great pæan of resurrection. Earwicker wakes from his long Saturday night's sleep and turns toward the morning light. But it is a resurrection in more than this superficial and rather comic sense: he has traversed the whole time-space world, and this too has turned out to have a pattern like that of individual human life—of waking and sleeping, of beginning and ending, of being young and growing old. The effect of his dream has been to reconcile him to his present stage of life, and this may be considered a new equilibrium. In the course of the process he is able to realize also his wife's feelings about the old age that is overtaking them both; he identifies himself with her to the extent of thinking her thoughts and going over her memories. And by the time we reach the threnody beginning "Soft morning, city!" the identification is so complete that he is speaking in her voice—which has now become also the voice of Anna Livia, returning to her father the sea. In other words, Earwicker's resurrection consists in his sense that he too will soon become part of the record, that he will breathe the air of the heroes in the common element of history. "Mememormee" is one of the very last of the difficult words in this difficult book.

Is it possible that *Finnegans Wake* represents a final stage in that long process of transcendence which has characterized Joyce's work from the beginning? In *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen Dedalus passes through what might be called an initiation rite to emerge as an artist dedicated to the creation of the "uncreated conscience" of his race. But this was not an adequate transcendence, in the sense either of primitive religion or of modern psychoanalysis, in which the individual always carries over elements of the old self into the new self that is restored to the world. Stephen had left behind all the old symbols of love and authority without discovering any new ones to take their place.

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The identification rather is with the *idea* of the role of the artist, which is simply one of the projections of what Freud calls the Super-ego. *Ulysses* records in its opening episodes the insufficiency of the program of "silence, exile, and cunning". And the crisis to which his new spiritual isolation has brought him is not resolved until he is put into communication with Bloom, the representative of common humanity. Through his imaginative sympathy with Bloom he is restored to the state of grace which will make freedom of creation at last possible for him. Now the main difference between *Ulysses* and the present work is that where humanity is represented in the first by a "coalescence" of universalized traits into a single figure existing in time and space, in the second these traits are diffused through time-space and coalesce finally only in the *pattern* of history. Humanity is impressive not in its actuality but in its immanence. And this becomes something comparable to the conception of the Divine Idea of the medieval theologians—that which is capable of taking on matter but is itself infinite in time and space.

Naturally the question is whether such an idea of Humanity is "anterior, posterior, and superior" to the individual, whether it can be an adequate object for transcendence. Croce, in his work on Vico, stresses the latter's theory of knowledge—the basis of which is the formula that only that can be known which is created. Perfect knowledge is the province of God alone because God created the universe. Man cannot know even the world of nature because he did not create it; therefore, the Cartesian school of his time were moving up a blind alley in their attempts to chart nature with their geometry. But Vico did insist that there is one realm which man could know because he created it—and that was his own history. Michelet sums up Vico's thought with the sentence: *humanity is its own creation.*

According to such a criterion of truth the symbols included in the myths and legends of the human past are just as capable of allegiance as the truths presented by the discursive intellect. The myth of man would be as true as the myth that has arisen through the separation of his reason from the rest of his nature at the Renaissance. But the pragmatic test of truth here as elsewhere would be the extent to which it could be made to function for the individual. And for the artist no truth may be said to exist that

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cannot find concrete expression in the order and unity to which he reduces his experience.

To raise these questions is not to guarantee their answers. But it may be pointed out that the most recent and hard-working school of Shakespearean criticism, with their concentration on themes and symbols rather than on ideas in the plays, may be helpful in enabling us to understand much that is difficult and forbidding in the literature of our time. The conclusion of this school is that in the later Shakespearean plays the world represented is no longer the world of contemporary Elizabethan actuality charted out by the Renaissance mind. *Othello, Hamlet,* and *Antony and Cleopatra* end up by taking us to a realm of human passion and feeling that can only be described as "transcendental". For this is a realm in which the images of human grandeur and suffering take on quasi-divine dimensions and significance. Piety to it is the act of commemoration: Hamlet's injunctions to Horatio that his story be told, Cleopatra's confidence that her love for Antony will live in the memory forever. By such an act of piety the imaginative artist in a period of cultural confusion still managed to preserve the forms and sentiments of a religious society without any of the theological obligations.

What is being suggested is that Joyce in this new work, like Yeats and Mann, seeks his salvation not in any escape from the present but in a transcendence of the present through the past. And the question of his seriousness, which has bothered some people, will be solved if we consider the piety that is involved in the energetic and still uncorrupted affirmation of life that is implicit in every movement of his writing. This is the seriousness of the greatest comedy, which always keeps in recollection the tragic knowledge that is at its base.

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BOOKS

TWO IN OUR TIME

ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG MAN. By John Dos Passos. Harcourt, Brace. $2.50.

THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH. By Waldo Frank. Doubleday, Doran. $2.75.

Here are two novels which for the most part run side by side, in time, in social and spatial geography, but which, like good Euclidean parallels, could never, not even in infinity, conceivably meet. Both deal with members of a generation that was old enough to be aware of the War but too young to participate in it, and, for both books, the War sounds the overture, and the Communist movement the finale. Dos Passos's hero is the son of a liberal preacher and teacher who lost his job for being a pacifist; Frank's heroine is the daughter of a pillar of the Church of the Revelationists, a sect that awaits in New England mill towns the Second Coming of Christ; and though both of the young people react in the usual way against their religious training, it is the stubborn Protestant impulse, the ineradicable zeal for perfection, that first carries them into the labor movement and then very nearly gets them run out of it.

The parallelism does not stop here. Both writers are tracing a gradual estrangement from normal middle-class life, and for this estrangement both offer similar psychological explanations. In each case, there was a pretty, gentle mother who died young. There were more prosperous, half-alienated uncles and aunts who were kind and patronizing, and elegant girl cousins who looked down their noses. Then there was the big college in New York, where both were outsiders, working their way through, mongrel protegé-servants in the households of bright young faculty members who talked about psychoanalysis and social problems, drank a good deal, and committed adultery. There was the apprenticeship served to labor, the girl as factory worker, the boy as itinerant farm hand. Finally, there is the membership in the Communist party, which seems to provide a substitute home, with a set of gods, a family life, and a fixed morality. But here the estrangement is extended until it appears to be at last complete; for both discover that they cannot really "belong" to a Party whose leadership places less value on the lives and limbs of obscure individual workers than on free publicity in the metropolitan press.

The dilemma for the two protagonists is thus the same: what is a sincere radical to do when between him and the working class he is trying to reach rises the bureaucratic opportunism of the Communist Party? The

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solutions differ. For Glenn Spotswood, the Dos Passos character, all that remains is to go out and die in Loyalist Spain, and to die with the full knowledge that his life is being laid down, not for the working class, but for nothing, for a democracy that exists only as a recruiting slogan in the Party press, for a revolution that has already been aborted by the Party hierarchy. Waldo Frank's novel, on the other hand, ends on what is called a note of hope: Mary Donald is brought to recognize that she must continue to dedicate herself to the Party, whatever her criticisms of it, that to believe and to see clearly at the same time, to work and to doubt together, is the harder but more glorious part.

The outcome of Dos Passos's novel, which is naturalistic, demands only belief. The conclusion of Frank's novel, which is mystical and hortative, demands adherence. Though the last and longest section of *Adventures of a Young Man* is labeled "The Moment of Choice", actually the work runs on the rails of determinism. To Glenn Spotswood all the avenues of choice, except the one taken, are in reality closed, and Dos Passos's sole task is to convince the reader that this is so. He must demonstrate that capitulation, either to the status quo of the American System, or to the status quo of the Third International, is, for his stubborn, honest, ascetic hero, out of the question; that, further, for this American who has lived in action, waited for Results and warmed himself with solidarity, oppositionism, with its loneliness, its absorption in theory, has been, and would always be, unbearable.

In Dos Passos, then, the outcome is presented as inevitable, but not particularly desirable; in Frank the conclusion is seen as desirable but not inevitable. That is, in *The Bridegroom Cometh,* while everything that happens to Mary Donald up to the final apocalypse is predicated by what has gone before (though even here, even on these steps along the road, the illusion of free choice, the will-she-go-to-college, will-she-stay-married-to-that-richman, is much better kept up than in Dos Passos), the conclusion itself is a very happy accident. This is more natural than one would think, since the real story Waldo Frank is telling, which he has got thoroughly mixed up with the political case-history, is a love story, and in a love story it is only the miraculous appearance of the Right Man that can solve the heroine's difficulties. Here it is David Markand, the hero of Frank's previous novel, who unexpectedly materializes when everything looks darkest, to give Mary Donald the correct mystico-poltical mandate and, at the same time, to make that mandate more attractive, both to her and to the reader, by offering her the Fulfilment in bed that she has been coveting for six hundred and twenty-eight pages. The advent of the Bridegroom brings with it such a sense of relief that the political problem seems to dissolve in the personal felicity. Actually, the political problem has been arbitrarily joined to the sexual one (for political dissatisfaction and sexual frustration are not necessarily concomitant), and it remains, when the book is over, disparate and angrily insoluble. Waldo Frank's prescription is, in the end, inadequate, at least for general use, for the Message, as he him-

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self tacitly admits, is unacceptable without the Man, and the Man, as he himself assures us, is one in a million.

Nevertheless, *The Bridegroom Cometh* has its virtues, which are inseparable from its faults. It is good for the same reasons that it is goofy. There is in it a capacity for taking life seriously that is associated with an incapacity for recognizing life's humors. The seriousness shows itself in the respect and skill with which the different intellectual positons of the characters are brought forth and analyzed; the humorlessness obtrudes in the pomposity and unconscious ribaldry of the title, in a hundred accidental double-entendres, in the alacrity with which a comic or prosaic image is pressed into company with a "beautiful" or moving idea, in the introduction, at a critical point, of Waldo Frank himself to deliver a lecture which gives the heroine the strength to go on. In addition to the intellectual seriousness, there is a great emotional push behind the book that sends the story, good and bad elements together, plunging heavily along. Yet this emotion, which is the motive power, works regularly to parody and to debase the book it carries. It is crude in quality; it is almost always in excess of the situation that touches it off; above all, it allows the author to form intimacies with characters whom he has not seen clearly enough to recognize in the artistic sense. There is in fact throughout the book a kind of embarrassing snuggling-up to the strangers who are its people that reminds one of the advice to the lovelorn columns in the paper, or of the novels of such a writer as Fannie Hurst. And the boy-meets-girl theme, of course, makes the echoes resound.

Dos Passos does not indulge in hasty familiarities. At first glance, his novel appears to be written from inside the hero, but the modified stream-of-consciousness style is misleading. What the book really gives is a series of close-ups of the hero himself and of everything that comes within the hero's field of vision. Dos Passos has rigorously kept his distance, confined himself to observable data. What expeditions are made into the hero's mind bring to light, not the tangle of feelings, wishes, ideas, memories, that exists in consciousness, but those unspoken sentences we frame to ourselves that could (almost) be overheard. Dos Passos has used this method before, and he handles it with suppleness and precision. The question that arises, however, is: is it adequate to the theme? In the *U. S. A.* trilogy, the author clearly felt it to be insufficient, since he wove in with those empirical narratives the newsreels, camera-eyes, and biographies that gave the work perspective, depth, scope, and a certain spiritual altitude that it would otherwise have lacked. But where *U. S. A.* is a piece of architecture, *Adventures of a Young Man* is done in the flat, and, in spite of its honesty, its courage, its intellectual clarity, its passages of fine writing, it is an unsatisfactory book.

From the point of view of the ordinary reader the book is bewildering because the author stood too close to his material. For general comprehension the tortuous politics of the left should have been viewed from without as well as from within; the method excluded this. From another

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point of view the book is cold, because the author has not come near enough his hero. The things that Waldo Frank understands and describes, the exaltation of the Communist movement of the twenties, the intellectual excitement it generated, the human values it revived, are all left out of the Dos Passos novel; and, as a result, the terrible drop at the end is not keenly felt because the reader has never been allowed to experience the lift that must have preceded it. The method, limiting the material to the facts of sensation and behavior, has excluded all the intangibles of adult life. The style, with long, gobbled, average-man's sentences running down at the end, its naive, You-know-me-Al habit of indirect discourse, has become an iron corset that has constricted the voice-production of the author until he can only talk baby talk.

The hostility to human dignity that expresses itself in the style comes out also in the attitude toward the characters. Unlike Waldo Frank, who is, if anything, too gullible, Dos Passos refuses in general to take his people seriously. Simple workers he does handle with reverence and gentleness, and the section devoted to Harlan, Kentucky is a small working-class epic. But an intellectual, to Dos Passos, is always a phony, and he packs the intellectual scene of the twenties with a group of harsh and repulsive caricatures. In contrast to these ferocious types, Glenn Spotswood has a certain primitive innocence, but their world is his world and their values are, for a time at least, his values; so that by turning the intellectuals of the twenties into a gang of vaudeville performers, Dos Passos reduces his hero to the status of a stooge.

The meanings of Dos Passos's novel are in the skeleton, not in the tissue. The reader must be able to supply the data that has been withheld if he is to understand what there is that is tragic and important in the story the author is telling.

MARY MCCARTHY

SIN AND EXPIATION

THE FAMILY REUNION. By T. S. Eliot. Harcourt, Brace. $1.50.

The work of few poets shows the intense continuity which we have learned to expect in the work of T. S. Eliot. It was to be predicted that *The Family Reunion* would contain a recapitulation of the symbols which dominate Eliot's earlier poetry. They are here: the purposeless people moving in a ring ("in an overcrowded desert, jostled by ghosts") of *The Waste Land;* the "hellish, sweet smell" that accompanies the apprehension of the supernatural from *Murder in the Cathedral;* the purgatorial flame of *Ash Wednesday.* But most of all, perhaps, the play is illuminated by that rather dry and not sufficiently appreciated poem, *Burnt Norton;* and in one sense, at least, the play may be said to be a restatement of *Burnt Norton* in terms of drama.

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The world of the play is the world of *The Waste Land:* a world inhabited by thoroughly respectable upper-class English ladies and gentlemen, "people to whom nothing has ever happened," and who consequently "cannot understand the unimportance of events," people whose "life" is "the keeping up of appearances. The making the best of a bad job."

But to Harry, the young head of the family, something has happened, something which breaks through the death-in-life in which he has lived, and his return to the family home completes his birth into the real world. At the end of the play, like Arnaut, he is, with joy, committing himself to the purgatorial flame, but he despairs of making the family understand what has happened to him, and why he cannot take up his place as head of the family and master of Wishwood. As he says late in the play

> . . . when one has just recovered sanity,
> And not yet assured in possession, that is when
> One begins to seem the maddest to other people.

His is essentially the position of the protagonist at the end of *The Waste Land*—"Hieronymo's mad againe."

But Harry's difficulty is Eliot's difficulty. The audience for whom he writes are quite as secularized as are the characters of the play, and they are far more hard-boiled in their rationalism. They are not more likely to understand the treatment of the relation of time to eternity expressed in *Burnt Norton;* they are even less likely to be sympathetic with it. Eliot has set himself a very difficult task in the play. For many readers, Harry's action will be quite incredible, and the play will consequently be murky and dull—another instance of Eliot's retreat into Anglo-Catholic mysticism.

But precisely because Eliot has faced this basic problem frankly, the play is a triumph. The dramatic fact, kept steadily in focus, is Harry's awareness that, intense and meaningful as the experience is to him, it is quite impossible for his uncles and aunts to understand it. There is even a grim humor in the fact that the revelation has come through Harry's sin (One remembers Eliot's comment in the essays, "and it is better in a paradoxical way to do evil than to do nothing; at least we exist."). Harry is conscious of the humor, just as he is willing to entertain the belief that he may be mad. The play does not turn into preaching. It remains focused on Harry's exploration of his experience.

It is symptomatic of the play's closeness of texture that one cannot separate out gobbets of poetry and have them retain the intensity which they undoubtedly possess in the context. The poetry is very closely integrated with the other elements of the play. The verse is one which allows Eliot to shift from the casual, fatuous, after-dinner conversation into the passionate language of Harry's colloquies with Agatha. There is a sense of dramatic acceleration, but not of strain; and this, in part, of course, is because the contrast is not superficial and external, but a part of the central dramatic fact. The contrasts occur, therefore, at the proper level, and

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thus allow Harry's experience to grow out of the family history, as they allow his crisis to grow legitimately out of the rather boring normality of a family reunion.

By the same token, the choruses are natural: the characters do not strike a pose as they begin their choruses. They are merely speaking aloud (by conversation) their unspoken thoughts in the awkward silences which occur as they wait for dinner. I have not seen the play performed, but my feeling is that it would gain from being acted, and this, again, is further testimony to the fact that Eliot has conscientiously subordinated every detail to the total effect of the play as a play.

A review so brief as this cannot hope to penetrate very far into the more interesting problems of organization which the play raises. Perhaps it is more important to try to say a further word about the reader's problem of belief. The play obviously has something to say to people who cannot accept Eliot's metaphysic. It would be folly to argue that his metaphysic is of no importance in this play in which it finds, perhaps, its most explicit statement. But it is also folly to prejudge the play as representing an intolerable narrowness of interest by narrowing our own interests in advance. For the reader who is likely to be troubled by this problem, one may suggest some such approach to the play as the following. Eliot has not lost touch with the realities. The desiccation, the fatuousness, the deadening complacency of the British upper classes are revealed in this play quite as mercilessly as Auden reveals them. Harry's vision of a different world is certainly not Auden's vision, but he occupies a position with relation to society basically similar to that occupied by Auden's characters. (Auden's "converted" characters have their problem of communication too, and their problem of expiation.) There will be time enough, and room enough outside the play, to argue the relative truth of the two visions. Suffice it to say here that Eliot, with a dramatic consistency and integrity which rarely lapses, has exploited the dramatic values inherent in the situation. And it is ultimately by a test which takes this dramatic integrity into account that his play will have to be appraised.

CLEANTH BROOKS

REPORT FROM THE SOUTH

THESE ARE OUR LIVES. As Told by the People and Written by Members of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. University of North Carolina Press. $2.00.

This book is the best possible answer to the campaign now going on in Congress to destroy the Federal Writers Project. I can think of no better use for Federal funds than to subsidize the sort of literary rediscover-

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ing of America represented by this volume, as by the various state and city WPA guide books.

"In writing the life histories," writes W. T. Couch in his editorial preface, "the first principle has been to let the people tell their own stories. With all our talk about democracy, it seems not inappropriate to let the people speak for themselves." This precept, intelligent both as sociology and as literary style, has been followed throughout the stories of the thirty-five cotton mill hands, tenant farmers, gas station operators, dentists, unemployed, and so on who speak in the pages of the book. The writers' comments all too often fall into literary stereotypes. ("A smile of satisfaction spread over his honest face." " 'H-m-m-m,' mused the squire, drawing down his bushy white eyebrows.") But such comments have been held down to a minimum: the great bulk of the book is direct quotation. If sometimes the talk itself has a rather literary flavor (" 'The full-fashioned knitting machine is a delicate and highly complicated machine.' "), it may be due to faulty transcription, or it may be because, after all, popular speech *is* influenced by literary forms.

But there is nothing literary about the eloquence with which the mill worker, George Dobbin, tells of seeing the families of evicted strikers camped out in the street of his town: "To see them little children settin' out there with no manner of shelter over their heads, to see the women wore out with tryin' to live, sure put you to thinkin' and made you sorry you had to stop at thinkin'. What you thought about the ones that would do it wouldn't make no pleasant talk." Or in the folk wisdom that crops out every now and then, as in this remark by an old farmer: "Life don't work out like a job of work. You study how to do a job and do it. It works pretty much like you thought it would. But when it comes to living, they's not any way you can plan it and have it go according."

The book's chief value, of course, is as a social document. There are certain limitations to its usefulness here. The editor writes that he selected these stories from over 400 turned in to him by Project writers, but he gives no indication of the grounds for his selection beyond that he chose what seemed to him "the most typical and most important", and that he did not include "any one of a number of extremely sordid stories". (These latter must be gruelling indeed, judging by some of the published stories.) There is a suspicious unanimity of praise from all classes for Roosevelt and the New Deal. Finally, the three Southeastern states covered in this material are far from being typical of American society. It is much to be hoped other volumes will be issued covering other regions.

One's first impression is a bewildering chaos of rambling narratives in every sort of dialect. But certain general themes slowly emerge. One is the rich variety, the unexpectedness of our culture, in spite of all the standardization of modern American life. There is the negro dentist who complains of the passion of his race for gold fillings, so that, if he is to keep his practice, he must do most of his drilling on perfectly sound molars. There is the small town merchant who tells how he breaks down the sales

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resistance of apathetic customers by slipping into a back room, taking off his coat, snapping on red arm bands, and donning a comedian's Yiddish derby—"I prance up to the customer. Nine times out of ten it gets a laugh, puts the customer in a good humor." There is the farm wife who said to the country doctor who had delivered her seventh child: "Doctor Cain, I've never been able to pay you nothin' for deliverin' my six other children, so I'll give you this one." There is John Sylvester Hinson, the negro farmer who says he never saw a toilet or even an outhouse until he was seventeen, and "I wuz a full grown man 'fore I tasted ice cream or Coca-Cola."

To one who like myself lives in a big city and has always had enough to eat, many of these stories seem as remote as tales of some tribe in the interior of Africa. The African savages, however, live in a comparatively rational and well-ordered society, in which each individual has his place in the whole, is useful to it and is therefore always sure of food and shelter. As a social habitat, the jungle has it all over the sovereign states of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. For most of these thirty-five people, life has been a long, tense, nerve-wracking struggle for food and shelter, a battle in which they never win decisive victories and in which disaster is always lying in wait to overwhelm them. The catastrophes which punctuate these narratives, unlike those bizarre disasters which overtake the wealthy, are monotonous variants of four themes. *"Hard Times":* "Later I bought the store and had it paid for when the depression hit us. Everything went up in smoke." *Illness:* "The only operation we've had in the family was mine, for appendicitis, in Portsmouth, twenty-two years ago. They charged us sixty-five dollars, and we made payments every year till we got it paid off." *Old Age:* "We're not making enough on the farm to live on now and we can't work any longer. . . . We are both plumb wore out and about done." *Death in the Family:* "I had to borrow forty-five dollars from Mr. Bascum to bury her wid. It kept me in the hole all the rest of the year paying for that casket." The final comment on our present civilization is that most of these people remember one Golden Age, a period when they were able to live in some security, like human beings: namely, the last world war. Then, for once, they had enough to eat. As George Dobbin puts it: "When I say times was good I don't mean we done no fancy livin' atall but we set down to the table three times a day and always found somethin' on it."

These people, naturally, do a lot of complaining. But it is notable they rarely see any connection between the social system and their sufferings. Often they blame themselves: " 'Bout all I've got left now is hope for another life. I've throwed away what chance I had in this one and I ain't faultin' nobody for it." Or they see it as the natural order of things: "I've always been poor and I guess I always will be. I ain't saying that's the government's fault. It's jist a downright truth, that's all." There is no revolutionary spirit in them. There may be a certain amount of editorial weighting here, but the impression is remarkably confirmed by a recent

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Gallup Poll of the unemployed. The question was asked: "What do you blame for the present unemployment in this country?" One out of five of those queried—the only group of any size to agree on an answer—replied: "Machines taking the place of men." As the Luddites tried to stop the industrial revolution by smashing the machines, so the present crisis of capitalism seems to the American masses to be the impersonal product of machine technology. The people in this book look on economic depression as a natural disaster, like a flood or a hurricane, and they no more think of opposing their wills to it than Fan Flanigan, the riverbank squatter, thinks of rebelling against the periodical floods that drive her out of her shack. "Oh, I tell you I've see that old river come up. And the gov'ment never sent us no notice of what the water was going to do. We jest set and see it come up. See it and know what we's in for. When it begins to git in the houses, we take and move everything up on the bank across the railroad tracks, and we camp there all on top of each other." So capitalist crisis washes over these people's homes, and so, too, they endure it.

The New Deal seems to be the only Way Out these people see. "We don't have anything, no furniture, no car, nothin'. All five of us eat, sleep, and do everything else in one room. . . . Sure I'm for this Administration. I'm with Roosevelt right up to the hilt." This faith in Franklin D. and his smile is the most tragic aspect of this tragic book.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

A GREAT POEM, IN ENGLISH

DUINO ELEGIES. By Rainer Maria Rilke. Translated by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender. W. W. Norton & Co. $2.00.

The present translation is the third and the best which has been made of Rilke's most important work. J. B. Leishman's previous translations of Rilke have been faithful, but composed in a barbarous un-English. Stephen Spender, who is responsible for a miraculous translation of one of Rilke's short poems, *Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes.*, has helped very much to mitigate these defects, and has added a sense for rhythm and diction which were hopelessly lacking in J. B. Leishman's previous work. The mitigation remains incomplete, however, and Mr. Leishman's insensitivity to the idiom of English persists chiefly in the vocabulary: "Have you so fully remembranced", "shining-most" (where "most luminous" would have been adequate), "stormily-rapturous", "quietened", "promiseful", "cheer-struck", "neat-quitting", and other like usages are frequent. The result is not a great English poem, but, given the German text also and a useful commentary, we do get a great poem, made available in English for everyone who has a little German. The perfect translator for Rilke would be a poet who could draw upon a Wordsworthian style, with all its directness,

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limpidity, and fluency, and yet at the same time be capable of such sudden complexities of syntax and imagery as occur in T. S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday.*

The *Duino Elegies* present the most complete statement of Rilke's vision of life. What he envisaged, what obsessed him, was a certain state of being which was sometimes enjoyed, Rilke supposed, by the child, the animal, the hero, the "great lovers", and those who had died in childhood. It was a state of being which involved immense difficulties. It was almost impossible of attainment. Most human beings avoided and attempted to escape from every intimation of it. In these Elegies, Rilke pleads and argues, in terms of symbols established in his previous writing, for a recognition and absorption in that state of being, which may be characterized crudely as one of utter *acceptance,* acceptance of pain, destiny, the here and now, the transiency of things, and death:

> *We've never, no, not for a single day*
> *pure space before us, such as that which flowers*
> *endlessly open into: always world,*
> *and never nowhere without no: that pure,*
> *unsuperintended element one breathes,*
> *endlessly knows, and never craves. A child*
> *sometimes gets quietly lost there, to be always*
> *jogged back again. Or sometimes dies and* is *it.*

What Rilke here has in mind may very well be that Unity of Being which concerned Yeats, and also, though without the sexual emphasis, the unity of being which prepossessed D. H. Lawrence so much.

This is a vision of life limited, as poetry, by being conceived in terms of a particular kind of abstraction to which lyric poets and especially the romantic tradition are always bound. The abstraction consists of conceiving of the individual as an individual only, a man confronted with life all by himself. The very greatest poetry, by comparison, grasps the individual in a multitude of relationships, as a prince of Denmark, a citizen of Florence, a member of the house of Atreus, and a human being in a definite time and place. Rilke for the most part saw the ego as confronted with a constellation of immortal essences. This did not prevent him from writing perfect lyric poetry, but the dramatic and narrative scope of the very greatest writing was out of the question, given his perspective, in which, for example, the lover is fulfilled when the loved one has been renounced, for, as Rilke wrote, to love is to be alone. A symbol of this limitation is perhaps to be seen in the fact that the World War shocked and paralyzed Rilke, so that he was unable to write. Wars involve the fate of societies, and are dominant subjects in Homer, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy, whether or not they wrote during a war. The comparison can be stated

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again by observing that in reading Rilke one would scarcely suppose that man was a social animal, a fact that is endlessly illuminated in Homer, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy. But if Rilke loses by this kind of comparison, he invites such a comparison at all times and above all by the overwhelming beauty in the pages of this book. DELMORE SCHWARTZ

MARX AND "THE PEOPLE"

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM. By Arthur Rosenberg. Knopf. $3.50.

"The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing."—Marx

With the rise of the bourgeois-democratic State, the "old, honorable, and intelligible word 'Democracy'" became a historical ambiguity of the first order: on the one hand, a political system carefully designed to hold the masses in check; on the other, the traditional name of the revolutionary mass movement, whatever its form, towards popular rule.

Today this double content of Democracy is manipulated as a disguise for every variety of political and social conspiracy. The Republican Party defends The People (of Wall Street) against the Government (of Wall Street). On a more pedantic plane, the IInd and IIIrd Internationals identify early red Democracy with present-day imperialist Republics, in order to give a "revolutionary" tinge to chauvinism—under a crimson spotlight the New Deal marches arm in arm with Captain Shays and John Brown. To complete the gamut, Mussolini presents the Fascist State as a true Democracy in the Jacobin sense, in as much as it forces the "participation" of the masses in State affairs. With the dwindling of the revolutionary stream of the old democratic movement, its liberating language has become the bitter source of the most cynical and humorless jests.

A new contribution to chaos has recently been issued by Dr. Arthur Rosenberg, ex-Communist member of the Reichstag, whose histories of Bolshevism and of the German Republic contained a number of interesting theses. The significant word in his *Democracy and Socialism* is the "and". At the start, the democratic and socialist movements were linked together; hence, the author contends, the true spirit of Marxism requires that an absolute conjunction be maintained between Democracy and Socialism. Obviously, this conclusion might mean almost anything, when everyone, from Hitler to Haile Selassie, is in favor of Democracy according to some definition, and only the conservatives are opposed to "Socialism", now or later. But Dr. Rosenberg makes use of the ambiguities of Democracy in order to present an original "Marxist" picture of how Democracy and Socialism interpenetrate.

Democracy and Socialism is divided into three sections: Democracy before Marx; Democracy and Marxism, 1845-95; From 1895 to the pres-

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ent. Paying special attention to France, the first section traces the contradictions and decline of revolutionary Democracy and the appropriation of the name "Democrat" by the anti-Jacobin bourgeois republicans, to whom Democracy meant a strong modern State defending "property, family, and fatherland". Here Dr. Rosenberg notes that this "extreme Left wing among all the defenders of private property" would, in a revolutionary situation, serve as a "protective shield, in order to intercept the assault of the radical masses". But while touching thus the historic nerve center of the republican parties, nowhere in his book does Rosenberg analyze the class function of the State created by these parties. Instead, these "Left wing" States are referred to throughout as "social democracies"; and a "democratic state" is defined as "a state in which the democratic movement rules". The struggles centering on the U. S. Constitution—an epical incident in the *conversion of Democracy* into a bourgeois State-form—are passed over in part of a sentence dealing with the organization of the Republican Party by Thomas Jefferson. Yet it is the relation of the bourgeois democratic State to both Democracy and Socialism that is the crux of Dr. Rosenberg's subject. Surely, the historian of the German Republic must be aware of this.

Rosenberg's account of the rise and decline of early Democracy is merely an introduction to the main body of his book, which is "intended to present primarily the practical work of Marx and Engels during the period of 1845-95". Here the ambiguity of Democracy, which the first section has avoided dispelling, gives birth to a remarkable fruit. The *Communist Manifesto* favored the advance of democratic revolutions. But democratic revolutions are the act of The People, not of any one class. It follows, Dr. Rosenberg argues, that Marx, as a revolutionist, was opposed to the independent action of the working class. What he demanded was unity with the democrats, and this alone can be the policy of the workers. Hence every true Marxist will today support the actions of the Democracies, in the interests of Revolution.

In his *18th Brumaire* Marx had already appraised the consequences of union with the "petty-bourgeois or democratic party": As against the coalition of the bourgeoisie, a coalition between petty-bourgeois aid workers had been formed, the so-called Social-Democratic Party . . . banquets celebrated the reconciliation. A joint program was drafted, joint election committees were set up, and joint candidates put forward. From the social demands of the proletariat the revolutionary point was broken off and a democratic turn given to them; from the democratic claims of the petty bourgeois the purely political form was stripped off and their socialist point thrust forward. Thus arose *Social Democracy*. . . . The peculiar character of Social Democracy is epitomized in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded not as a means of doing away with both extremes, capital and wage labor, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony. . . . Finally, instead of gaining an accession of strength from it, the democratic party had infected the pro-

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letariat with its own weakness, and, as usual with the great deeds of democrats, the leaders had the satisfaction of being able to charge their 'people' with desertion, and the people the satisfaction of being able to charge its leaders with selling it."

To preserve his image of Marx as an advocate of populism, Dr. Rosenberg simply avoids all mention of this world-famous document. There is perhaps a reference to it in the statement that "after 1850 Marx and Engels emphasized the differences which separated them from the official democrats, in a sharply defined manner." But, the same paragraph at once insists, "they remained democrats in the best sense of the word and in the spirit of 1848."

Having shown that Marx, in his eagerness to advance the Revolution everywhere to its next stage, did not concern himself primarily with the program-details of non-revolutionary labor parties, Dr. Rosenberg interprets Marx's controversies with Lassalle and with the German Social Democracy as arising essentially out of his objections (held by Rosenberg to be correct) to the formation of an independent labor party. "The more clearly," says he, "the vanguard of the proletariat realized its own position within bourgeois society, the greater became its tendency to isolate itself." And, of course, being a revolutionist, Marx was against "isolation".

The cause of the failures of the working class parties Rosenberg finds in the fact that the workers abandoned the idea of the "People's Revolution", and became too class conscious! And yet Rosenberg himself tells us that by 1849 "revolutionary democracy of the type which had been created by the Great French Revolution was now finally finished." Despite this, he demands that Marx be accepted as the Don Quixote of moribund Jacobinism.

In 1870 Engels expressed his fears concerning action by the Paris workers for the purpose of national defense: "They can lose nothing by waiting. Any boundary changes are only provisional and will again be reversed. It would be madness to fight *for the bourgeoisie* against the Prussians. . . ." (italics ours) According to Rosenberg, this should not be read as advice to the workers to act in their own interests only, but as a warning against separate class action.

Rosenberg's argument bears its full harvest in his version of events since 1895. Criticising the pre-war Social Democrats, he does not charge them with treachery or cowardice before national imperialism, but rather chides them for an excessive class consciousness which separated the workers from bourgeois politics. With his happy concept of unity, which disregards all specific programs, Rosenberg can embrace either a successful Revolution or an abnegation of class consciousness like the Popular Front. Thus Lenin is accepted as a true Marxist, precisely because he is interpreted to be a "revolutionary Democrat" and not a Socialist. Lenin's party was an anti-democratic organization of professional revolutionaries? This, too, is in the Marxist-Jacobin tradition. Today, the Communist International has also returned to this tradition, because together with the social-

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ists and the "still existent bourgeois democratic groups" (what! not finally finished?) they "endeavor to view problems, not only from the point of view of a particular trade, but rather on a national scale."

The ambiguity of Democracy thus provides Rosenberg with a theory of Revolutionary Socialism that should prove highly satisfying to Stalin's up-to-date Americans. The peoples' rebellions of early capitalism are held up as models for modern socialist action, and the bourgeois republics that arose on their backs are treated as the main agencies for freedom and Socialism. The same equivocation also promotes the thesis that socialism, as the continuator of revolutionary Democracy, ought to ally itself in 1939 with the governments of England, France, the U.S., and the U.S.S.R. for action against Germany and Italy. It is through identifying these States with the revolutionary mass movements of 1848 that this "Marxist" is able to find a hopeful omen for the working class in the League of Nations' sanctions against Italy in 1935, "the first sign of serious international democratic solidarity since 1849." (This solidarity, Dr. Rosenberg complains, failed chiefly because "the great English capitalists" could not "see why they should sacrifice their wealth and their lives [sic] on the side of the workers in a world struggle between fascism and social democracy.") While the immortality of revolutionary Democracy is further demonstrated in the "astounding stability", based upon "a class alliance in the spirit of the social democracy of 1848," of the Czechoslovakian democratic Republic! (The Preface to the American edition written after Munich takes this back.)

It is a Marxist principle that the working class, when its political actions express its own class interests, draws behind it the city and rural poor as well as a section of the lower bourgeoisie; so that under advanced industrial conditions revolutionary Democracy, now composed overwhelmingly of class conscious proletarians, goes over necessarily into Socialism. By his sly shift in historical meanings, Rosenberg converts this principle of "permanent revolution" into that of coalition governments and the Popular Front. Yet world history since 1848 proves that if the working class merges, "the people" will have no leadership, since the working class alone can furnish the next step. Thus the Spanish "democratic front" is as surely defeated as the "isolated" working class parties of Germany—getting together is no substitute for a program.

As Democracy becomes more and more dependent upon the acts of the working class, the thesis of Rosa Luxemburg against the reformists casts a burning light upon the true relation between Democracy and Socialism today: "The solution is quite simple: from the fact that bourgeois liberalism gave up the ghost from fear of the rising labor movement and of its goal, it follows that the socialist labor movement is and can be the only support of Democracy; and that the fate of Socialism does not depend on bourgeois Democracy but, on the contrary, the fate of democratic development depends on the socialist movement. Democracy does not acquire greater chances of life in the degree that the workers give up

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their struggle for freedom, but rather to the extent that the socialist movement grows strong enough to fight the reactionary consequences of world politics and of the bourgeois desertion [of Democracy]. Hence, he who wishes to strengthen Democracy should desire also to strengthen and not to weaken the socialist movement. To abandon the struggle for Socialism means to abandon both the working class movement and Democracy."

HAROLD ROSENBERG

Statement of the L.C.F.S.

WE ADDRESS this statement to all artists and writers who are concerned about the present drift of the United States to reaction and war.

Not in this country alone but everywhere, culture is threatened by advancing reaction. In forcing the recrudescence of social forms which had seemed obsolete, German and Italian fascism have at the same time compelled the revival of obsolete modes in art and science. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, where nationalism and personal dictatorship are replacing the revolutionary ideals of freedom and democracy, culture suffers regimentation and debasement no less severe.

Nor are signs lacking of deepening social reaction in the United States. Increasingly, experimentation is discouraged in the creative arts; a premium is put upon the conventional and the academic. The social sciences are witnessing the revival of various forms of obscurantism, the rise of an intolerant orthodoxy. Educators are being intimidated through loyalty oaths. Government censorship cripples W.P.A. theatre, art, and literary projects. Terrorism is exercised by the Catholic church over such cultural enterprises as the movies. Covert sabotage hinders the publication of work by independent and revolutionary writers. And in heresy hunting bodies like the Dies Committee, many of these tendencies find official and concentrated expression.

Such conditions are a challenge to independent intellectuals. Yet no existing cultural organization is ready fully to meet the challenge. If in the totalitarian states intellectual life is an affair for the police, in America it is preparing, under pressure of anti-fascist hysteria, for voluntary abdication. Cultural circles, formerly progressive, are now capitulating to the spirit of fascism while ostensibly combatting its letter. They fight one falsehood with another. To the deification of Hitler and Mussolini they counterpose the deification of Stalin, the unqualified support of Roosevelt. The mysticism of "Aryan" supremacy they match with a national-democratic myth conjured out of America's historic infancy. To the war drive of the fascist powers they reply with a war drive of their own.

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In consequence the intellectual gains of recent decades are rapidly being wiped out. The last war set moving in this country a profound current of scepticism in respect to bourgeois values in art and life. Responsible for the finest cultural achievements of the post-war period, this tendency culminated after 1929 in the radicalisation of a significant part of the intelligentsia. But now, in the name of a spurious "anti-fascist" unity, numerous intellectuals are deserting their hard-won critical independence. They are giving up their opposition to capitalist exploitation and oppression, to imperialist domination of colonial lands. They no longer protest repression and frame-up in this country, in the Soviet Union, and in other "democracies." They have forsaken the struggle for the right of asylum. In the name of a "democratic front" against tyranny abroad they put up with increasing tyranny at home. In short, they have surrendered the right—and duty—to protest all injustice, to investigate all formulæ, to challenge all dogmas, to think through all problems. And inspired by Stalinist and social-reformist propaganda they advocate a new war for "democracy." Yet this war must give birth to military dictatorship and to forms of intellectual repression far more violent than those evoked by the last war.

Among advanced intellectual circles in the United States the most active forces of reaction today are the so-called cultural organizations under control of the Communist party. Pretending to represent progressive opinion, these bodies are in effect but apologists for the Kremlin dictatorship. They outlaw all dissenting opinion from the Left. They poison the intellectual atmosphere with slander. And they have succeeded in imposing their views and methods on groups formerly independent of the Communist party.

Against these forces we, the undersigned, believe that artists and writers must unite to defend their independence as craftsmen, indeed, their very right to work. It goes without saying that we do not subscribe to that currently fashionable catchword: "Neither communism nor fascism." On the contrary, we recognize that the liberation of culture is inseparable from the liberation of the working classes and of all humanity. Shall we abandon the ideals of revolutionary socialism because one political group, while clinging to its name, has so miserably betrayed its principles? Shall we revert to a program of middle-class democracy because the Kremlin government, in obedience to its own interests—which are no longer the interests of the Soviet people or of the masses anywhere—directs us to do so? On the contrary, we reject all such demands. Democracy under industrial-capitalism can offer no permanent haven to the intellectual worker and artist. In its instability, it becomes the breeding ground of dictatorship, and such liberties as it grants us today, it will violently revoke tomorrow. The idea of democracy must come to flower in a socialist democracy. In the revolutionary reconstruction of society lies the hope of the world, the promise of a free humanity, a new art, an unrestricted science.

The defense of intellectual freedom requires, moreover, that we reject

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all theories and practices which tend to make culture the creature of politics, even revolutionary politics. We demand COMPLETE FREEDOM FOR ART AND SCIENCE. NO DICTATION BY PARTY OR GOVERNMENT. Culture not only does not seek orders but by its very nature cannot tolerate them. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with the spirit of conformity; and if art and science are to be true to the revolution, they must first be true to themselves.

We are not alone in these convictions. Our principles are in general agreement with those contained in a recent manifesto of André Breton, the French poet, and Diego Rivera, the Mexican painter. Movements inspired by their manifesto have already appeared in France, England and elsewhere.

We appeal, therefore, to all writers and artists in the United States who are in substantial accord with our views to unite with us in forming a revolutionary league of writers and artists. The function of this organization will be to give publicity to our aims, to provide a forum for cultural discussion, and to campaign against all reactionary tendencies in intellectual life wherever they arise.

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